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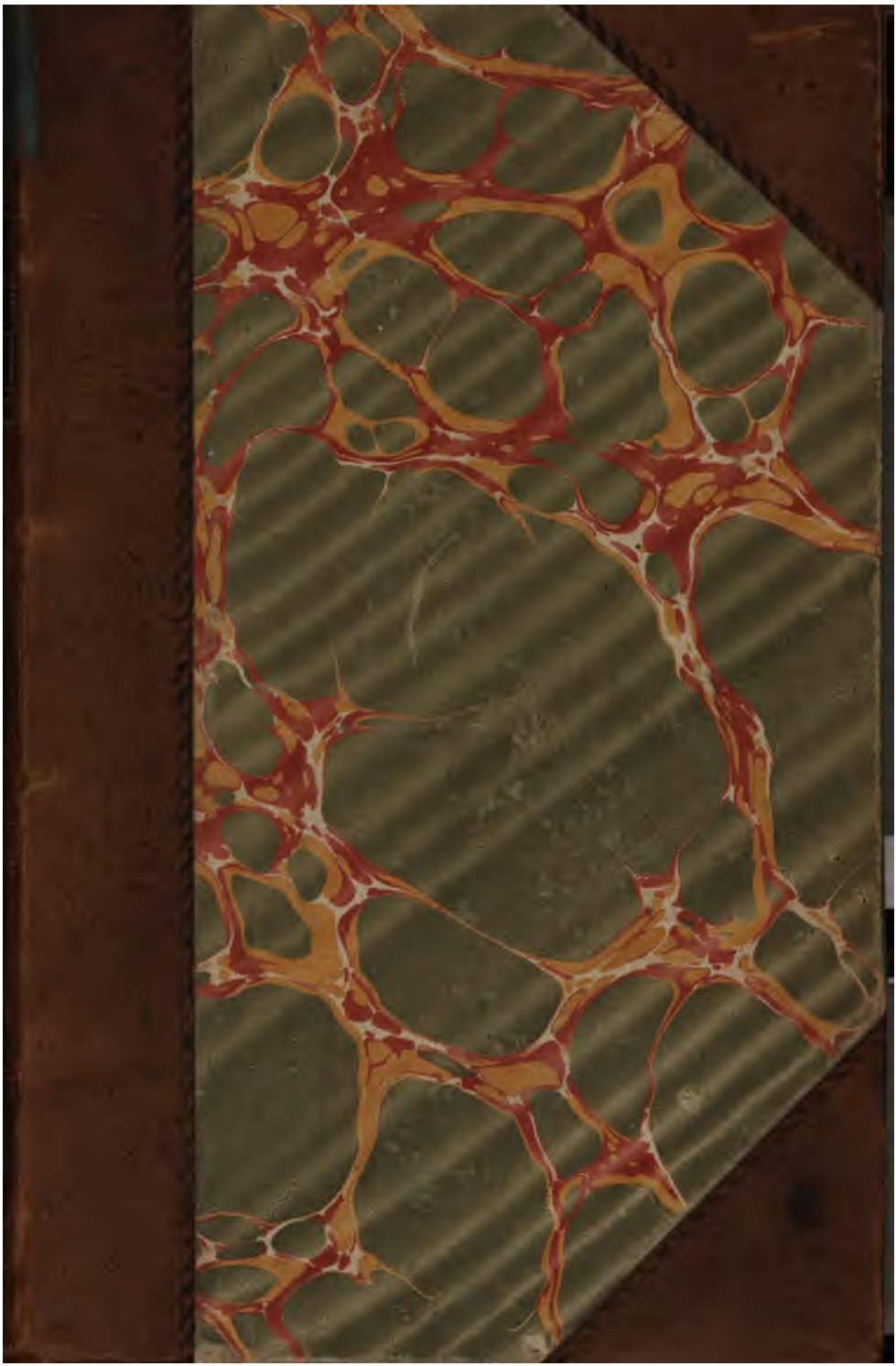

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MONALDI.

MONALDI:

A TALE.

Who knows himself must needs in prophecy
Too oft behold his own most sad reverse.

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LONDON:
EDWARD MOXON, DOVER STREET

MDCCCXLII.

207.

LONDON:
BRADBURY AND EVANS, PRINTERS, WHITEFRIARS.

NOTE.

THIS little story was ready for the press as long ago as 1822, but having been written for the periodical of a friend, which was soon after discontinued, the manuscript was thrown into the author's desk, where it has lain till the present time. It is now published—not with the pretensions of a Novel, but simply as a Tale.

WASHINGTON ALLSTON.

BOSTON,
August 1841.

INTRODUCTION.

THERE is sometimes so striking a resemblance between the autumnal sky of Italy and that of New England at the same season, that when the peculiar features of the scenery are obscured by twilight it needs but little aid of the imagination in an American traveller to fancy himself in his own country; the bright orange of the horizon, fading into a low yellow, and here and there broken by a slender bar of molten gold, with the broad mass of pale apple-green blending above, and the sheet of deep azure over these, gradually darkening to the zenith—all carry him back to his dearer home. It was at such a time as this, and beneath such a sky, that (in the year 17—) while my

vettura was slowly toiling up one of the mountains of Abruzzo, I had thrown myself back in the carriage, to enjoy one of those mental illusions which the resemblance between past and present objects is wont to call forth. Italy seemed for the time forgotten; I was journeying homeward, and a vision of beaming, affectionate faces passed before me; I crossed the threshold, and heard—oh, how touching is that soundless voice of welcoming in a day-dream of home!—I heard the joyful cry of recognition, and a painful fulness in my throat made me struggle for words—when, at a sudden turn in the road, my carriage was brought to the ground.

Fortunately I received no injury in the fall; but my spell of happiness was broken, and I felt again that I was in Italy. On recovering my legs, I called to the postilion to help me right the carriage. He crossed himself very devoutly, and said it was impossible without other assistance; and how to get that he knew not, as we were several miles

from any habitation. The vettura was light, and I thought we could manage it ourselves; but I remonstrated in vain. He said it could not be done, and quietly seating himself on a stone, began striking a light for his pipe. This movement seemed suspicious. Though Italy at that time was but little infested with banditti, the armies of the Revolution having drained off the worst of her population, I yet could not quite free my mind from apprehension. "We must wait," said the postilion, "till some traveller passes." At that moment I heard a shrill whistle from the glen below. This was no time for parleying; so, snatching up my portmanteau, I cocked my pistols, and bade the postilion go on before me at his peril. I then followed him with all speed. As we passed an angle of the road, I thought he made an attempt to slip aside down a narrow defile to the left, whence I distinctly heard another whistle, as in answer to the first. This satisfied me of his treachery, and, pointing to my pistol, "The instant

I am attacked," said I, "you are a dead man; so, if you value your life, take the first path that leads to a house."

The tone in which I uttered this threat had the desired effect. He quickened his pace, and, in a few minutes, cautiously whispering "To the right," he led the way into a narrow sheep-track, winding up the side of the mountain. Though swift of foot, it was as much as I could do to keep up with him, fear seeming to have lent him wings. And though the path was often obstructed by loose stones and brambles, we continued to ascend at the same pace, as I should guess, for near half an hour, when we entered upon a small plain, or mountain heath. The moon was just up, and I thought I could discern something like a human dwelling. I asked what it was. "For the love of heaven, go not near it," said the postilion; "'tis the house of the mad"—Suspecting him of some artifice, I presented my pistol and bade him go on. Twice he stopped and attempted to speak, but his

teeth chattered so with fear that he could not articulate. Finding me, however, determined, he proceeded; but we had scarcely reached the spot, when, uttering a cry of terror, he gave a sudden spring back, and darted by me like an arrow. I looked behind me, but he was out of sight. I then turned towards the building, when I, too, involuntarily drew back: it was indeed no other than the unhappy object of the postilion's panic.

He was sitting on a stone, in a little spot of moonshine, before the door of his hovel, so that I had a full view of his figure, except the legs, which appeared to be half buried in a hole, worn into the earth by long and continued treading. But there was no motion now in his feet, nor in any part of him; he was fixed, like the stone he sat on; his eyes riveted as if on some object before him.—Such eyes! I shall never forget them; they were neither fierce nor fiery, but white and shining, like the eyes of a dead man, with their last expression fixed upon them. Of the rest of his face I have

only a general impression that it was pale, and his beard black and bushy; for I seemed then only to see his eyes, in their ghastly whiteness; and even now while I write, I shudder at the recollection of their passive, enduring look of misery.

There is a fascination in fearful objects so strong with some, as oftentimes to counteract the will. I would have passed on, but something seemed to fasten me, as it were, to the spot, and I stood before him like one statue gazing upon another. Neither could I speak; not that I was checked by anything like fear; it was rather by the sad conviction that all intercourse was hopeless. I felt that I could touch no chord of a mind so fearfully unstrung, and that words would but fall upon his brain like drops of water upon marble.

Happily I was soon relieved of this painful constraint by the approach of an old woman, who, as I afterwards learnt, was an inhabitant of the dwelling. The sound of her voice seemed to have an instant effect on the unhappy being; he started

as from a trance, and giving me a hurried look, as if perceiving me for the first time, darted into the cottage. I would gladly have staid to satisfy my curiosity with some particulars of his history, but the old woman, who spoke only a barbarous provincial dialect, was quite unintelligible; I understood enough of it, however, to obtain from her a direction to the nearest convent, which to my great comfort I found was within a short distance.

Following her direction, I soon reached the convent, where my reception was so courteous as soon to drive from my mind the vexatious cause of my intrusion, the superior himself coming forward to do the honours of his house, and conducting me to the refectory. The monks, who had just sat down to supper, rose as I entered, and respectfully invited me to the table. I believe I did ample justice to their hospitality; for a sense of present security added to my late exercise had given unusual keenness to my appetite. The good fathers seemed

to take a pleasure in seeing me eat, and I thanked them in my heart.

The gratuitous kindness of a stranger will often touch us more sensibly for the moment than the welcome even of a friend; it seems to give a wider play to our good feelings, to generalise as it were our affections, and make us ashamed of all narrow or exclusive likings. It was quickly perceived that I had a proper sense of the courtesy of my entertainers, and all my reserve was soon banished. I felt as if I was amongst friends. But I was more particularly attracted by the prior. He was a venerable old man, apparently above sixty; of a commanding and even lofty presence, yet tempered by benignity; but the cast of his countenance seemed inclining to melancholy; perhaps this might have been owing to the expression of his eyes, which had somewhat of an inward look, as if he had been used to dwell rather on past images in the memory than on those about him. As I looked on his face, I could not help thinking there had once

been a time when his interest in the world was as strong as mine; when hopes and fears, and all that makes up the tide of passion, had their ebbs and flows about his heart. These thoughts seemed to force my respect, and I forgot, as I listened to him, all my prejudices against monks and monasteries. It is not easy for one to inspire esteem without perceiving it; the worthy father was not wanting in tact, and we became as sociable before the evening closed as if we had known each other for years.

Having expressed a wish to see the curiosities of the place, the good prior the next morning offered his services as my *cicerone*. As I followed him to the chapel, he observed, that his convent had little to gratify the taste of an ordinary traveller; "but if you are a connoisseur," he added, "you will find few places better worth visiting. I perceive you think the picture opposite hardly bears me out in this assertion. I agree with you. It is certainly very insipid, and the mass of our

collection is little better; but we have *one* that redeems them all — one picture worth twenty common galleries." As he said this, we stopped before a Crucifixion by Lanfranco. Next to his great work at St. Andrea della Valle, it was the best I had seen of that master. Though eccentric and somewhat capricious, it was yet full of powerful expression, and marked by a vigour of execution that made everything around it look like washed drawings. "Yes," said I, supposing this the picture alluded to, "and I can now agree with you, 'tis worth a thousand of the flimsy productions of the last age." "True," answered the prior; "but I did not allude"——Here he was called out on business of the convent.

After waiting some time for my conductor's return, and finding little worth looking at besides the Lanfranc, I turned to leave the chapel by the way I had entered; but, taking a wrong door, I came into a dark passage, leading, as I supposed, to an inner court. This being my first visit to a

convent, a natural curiosity tempted me to proceed, when, instead of a court, I found myself in a large apartment. The light (which descended from above) was so powerful, that for nearly a minute I could distinguish nothing, and I rested on a form attached to the wainscoting. I then put up my hand to shade my eyes, when—the fearful vision is even now before me—I seemed to be standing before an abyss in space, boundless and black. In the midst of this permeable pitch stood a colossal mass of gold, in shape like an altar, and girdled about by a huge serpent, gorgeous and terrible; his body flecked with diamonds, and his head, an enormous carbuncle, floating like a meteor on the air above. Such was the Throne. But no words can describe the gigantic Being that sat thereon—the grace, the majesty, its transcendant form; and yet I shuddered as I looked, for its superhuman countenance seemed, as it were, to radiate falsehood; every feature was in contradiction—the eye, the mouth, even to the nostril—

whilst the expression of the whole was of that unnatural softness which can only be conceived of malignant blandishment. It was the appalling beauty of the King of Hell. The frightful discord vibrated through my whole frame, and I turned for relief to the figure below; for at his feet knelt one who appeared to belong to our race of earth. But I had turned from the first only to witness in this second object its withering fascination. It was a man apparently in the prime of life, but pale and emaciated, as if prematurely wasted by his unholy devotion, yet still devoted — with outstretched hands, and eyes upraised to their idol, fixed with a vehemence that seemed almost to start them from their sockets. The agony of his eye, contrasting with the prostrate, reckless worship of his attitude, but too well told his tale: I beheld the mortal conflict between the conscience and the will — the visible struggle of a soul in the toils of sin. I could look no longer.

As I turned, the prior was standing before me.

"Yes," said he, as if replying to my thoughts, "it is indeed terrific. Had you beheld it unmoved, you had been the first that ever did so."

"There is a tremendous reality in the picture that comes home to every man's imagination; even the dullest feel it, as if it had the power of calling up that faculty in minds never before conscious of it."

The effect of this extraordinary work was so unlike what I had hitherto experienced from pictures, that it was not until some time after I had returned to my companion's apartment, that I thought of making any inquiry concerning the artist.

"Your curiosity is natural," said the prior; "but I cannot talk on this subject." The good man here turned away to conceal his emotion. I could not with decency press him further, and rose to retire; when he requested me to stop. After a little while, unlocking a cabinet, he put into my hands the following manuscript. "There," said

he, "if you wish to know more of the picture and its author, is what will satisfy you. I do not offer it to gratify your curiosity: it will touch, if I mistake not, a worthier feeling. The narrative is brief, and, perhaps, somewhat sketchy; but it is sufficiently particular for the purpose for which it was written. It was drawn up by one well acquainted with most of the persons you will find described in it."

MONALDI.

CHAPTER I.

AMONG the students of a seminary at Bologna were two friends, more remarkable for their attachment to each other, than for any resemblance in their minds or dispositions. Indeed there was so little else in common between them, that hardly two boys could be found more unlike. The character of Maldura, the eldest, was bold, grasping, and ostentatious; while that of Monaldi, timid and gentle, seemed to shrink from observation. The one, proud and impatient, was ever labouring for distinction; the world, palpable, visible, audible, was his idol; he lived only in externals, and could neither act nor feel but for effect; even his secret reveries having an outward direction, as if he could not think without a view to praise, and

anxiously referring to the opinion of others; in short, his nightly and his daily dreams had but one subject—the talk and the eye of the crowd. The other, silent and meditative, seldom looked out of himself either for applause or enjoyment; if he ever did so, it was only that he might add to, or sympathise in, the triumph of another; this done, he retired again, as it were to a world of his own, where thoughts and feelings, filling the place of men and things, could always supply him with occupation and amusement.

Had the ambition of Maldura been less, or his self-knowledge greater, he might have been a benefactor to the world. His talents were of a high order. Perhaps few have ever surpassed him in the power of acquiring; to this he united perseverance; and all that was known, however various and opposite, he could master at will. But here his power stopped; beyond the regions of discovered knowledge he could not see, and dared not walk, for to him all beyond was "outer darkness;" in a word, with all his gifts he wanted that something, whatever it might be, which gives the living principle to thought. But this sole deficiency was the last of which he suspected himself. With that

self-delusion so common in young men of mistaking the praise of what is promising for that of the thing promised, he too rashly confounded the ease with which he carried all the prizes of his school, with the rare power of commanding at pleasure the higher honours of the world.

But the honours of a school are for things and purposes far different from those demanded and looked for by the world. Maldura unfortunately did not make the distinction. His various knowledge, though ingeniously brought together, and skilfully set anew, was still the knowledge of other men; it did not come forth as in new birth, from the modifying influence of his own nature. His mind was hence like a thing of many parts, yet wanting a whole. In proportion to its stores such a mind will be valued, and even admired; but it cannot command that inward voice—the only true voice of fame, which speaks not, be it in friend or enemy, till awakened by the presence of a master spirit.

Such were the mind and disposition of Maldura; and from their unfortunate union sprang all the after evils in his character. As yet, however, he was known to himself and others only as a remark-

able boy. His extraordinary attainments placing him above competition, he supposed himself incapable of so mean a passion as envy; indeed the high station from which he could look down on his associates gave a complacency to his mind not unfavourable to the gentler virtues; he was, therefore, often kind, and even generous without an effort. Besides, though he disdained to affect humility, he did not want discretion, and that taught him to bear his honours without arrogance. His claims were consequently admitted by his schoolfellows without a murmur. But there was one amongst them whose praises were marked by such warmth and enthusiasm as no heart not morally insensible could long withstand; this youth was Monaldi. Maldura naturally had strong feelings, and so long as he continued prosperous and happy, their course was honourable. He requited the praises of his companion with his esteem and gratitude, which soon ripened into a friendship so sincere that he believed he could even lay down his life for him.

It was in this way that two natures so opposite became mutually attracted. But the warmth and magnanimity of Monaldi were all that was yet

known to the other; for, though not wanting in academic learning, he was by no means distinguished; indeed, so little, that Maldura could not but feel and lament it.

The powers of Monaldi, however, were yet to be called forth. And it was not surprising that to his youthful companions he should have then appeared inefficient, there being a singular kind of passiveness about him easily mistaken for vacancy. But his was like the passiveness of some uncultured spot, lying unnoticed within its nook of rocks, and silently drinking in the light, and the heat, and the showers of heaven, that nourish the seeds of a thousand nameless flowers, destined one day to bloom and to mingle their fragrance with the breath of nature. Yet to common observers the external world seemed to lie only

"Like a load upon his weary eye;"

but to them it appeared so because he delighted to shut it out, and to combine and give another life to the images it had left in his memory; as if he would sleep to the real and be awake only to a world of shadows. But, though his emotions seldom betrayed themselves by any outward signs,

there was nothing sluggish in the soul of Monaldi; it was rather their depth and strength that prevented their passage through the feeble medium of words. He regarded nothing in the moral or physical world as tiresome or insignificant; every object had a charm, and its harmony and beauty, its expression and character, all passed into his soul in all their varieties, while his quickening spirit brooded over them as over the elementary forms of a creation of his own. Thus living in the life he gave, his existence was too intense and extended to be conceived by the common mind: hence the neglect and obscurity in which he passed his youth.

But the term of pupilage soon came to an end, and the friends parted—each, as he could, to make his way in the world.

The profession which Monaldi had chosen for the future occupation of his life was that of a painter; to which, however, he could not be said to have come wholly unprepared. The slight sketch just given of him will show that the most important part, the mind of a painter, he already possessed; the nature of his amusements (in which, some one has well observed, men are generally most in earnest) having unconsciously disciplined

his mind for this pursuit. He had looked at Nature with the eye of a lover: none of her minutest beauties had escaped him, and all that were stirring to a sensitive heart and a romantic imagination were treasured up in his memory, as themes of delightful musing in her absence: and they came to him in those moments with that never-failing freshness and life which love can best give to the absent. But the skill and the hand of an artist were still to be acquired.

But perseverance, if not a mark of genius, is at least one of its practical adjuncts: and Monaldi possessed it. Indeed there is but one mode of making endurable the perpetual craving of any master-passion—the continually labouring to satisfy it. And, so it be innocent, how sweet the reward! giving health to the mind without the sense of toil. This Monaldi enjoyed; for he never felt that he had been toiling, even when the dawn, as it often happened, broke in upon his labours.

Without going more into detail, in a very few years Monaldi was universally acknowledged to be the first painter in Italy. His merit, however, was not merely comparative. He differed from his contemporaries no less in kind than in degree. If

he held any thing in common with others, it was with those of ages past—with the mighty dead of the fifteenth century; from them he had learned the language of his art, but his thoughts, and their turn of expression, were his own. His originality, therefore, was felt by all; and his country hailed him as one coming, in the spirit of Raffaelle, to revive by his genius her ancient glory.

It is not, however, to be supposed, that the claims of the new style were allowed at once, since it required not only the acquisition of a new taste, but the abandoning an old one. In what is called a critical age, which is generally that which follows the age of production, it is rarely that an original author is well received at once. There are two classes of opponents, which he is almost sure to encounter: the one consists of those who, without feeling or imagination, are yet ambitious of the reputation of critics; who set out with some theory, either ready made to their hands and purely traditional, or else *reasoned out* by themselves from some plausible dogma, which they dignify with the name of philosophy. As these criticise for *distinction*, every work of art becomes to them, of course, a personal affair, which they

accordingly approach either as patrons or enemies; and woe to the poor artist who shall have had the hardihood to think for himself! In the other class is comprised the well-meaning multitude, who, having no pretensions of their own, are easily awed by authority; and, afraid to give way to their natural feeling, receive without distrust the more confident dicta of these self-created arbiters. Perhaps at no time was the effect of this peculiar usurpation more sadly illustrated than in the prescriptive commonplace which distinguished the period of which we speak. The first appearance of Monaldi was consequently met by an opposition proportioned to the degree of his departure from the current opinions. But as his good sense had restrained him from venturing before the public until by long and patient study he had felt himself entitled to take the rank of a master, he bore the attacks of his assailants with the equanimity of one who well knew that the ground he stood upon was not the quicksand of self-love. Besides, he had no vanity to be wounded, and the folly of their criticisms he disdained to notice, leaving it to time to establish his claims. Nor was this wise forbearance long unrewarded, for it is the nature of

truth, sooner or later, to command recognition; some kindred mind will at last respond to it; and there is no true response that is not given in love; hence the lover-like enthusiasm with which it is hailed, and dwelt upon, until the echo of like minds spreads it abroad, to be finally received by the many as a matter of faith. It was so with Monaldi.

As our business, however, is rather with the man than the painter, we shall only stop to notice one of his works; and that less as being the cause of his final triumph, than as illustrating the peculiar character of his mind. The subject of the picture was the first sacrifice of Noah after the subsiding of the waters; a subject of little promise from an ordinary hand, but of all others, perhaps, the best suited to exhibit that rare union of intense feeling and lofty imagination which characterised Monaldi. The composition consisted of the patriarch and his family, at the altar, which occupied the foreground; a distant view of mount Ararat, with the ark resting on its peak; and the intermediate vale. These were scanty materials for a picture; but the fulness with which they seemed to distend the spectator's mind left no room for

this thought. There was no dramatic variety in the kneeling father and his kneeling children; they expressed but one sentiment—adoration; and it seemed to go up as with a single voice. This gave the soul which the spectator felt; but it was one that could not have gone forth under common day-light, nor ever have pervaded with such emphatic life other than the shadowy valley, the misty mountain, the mysterious ark, again floating as it were on a sea of clouds, and the lurid, deep-toned sky, dark yet bright, which spoke to the imagination of a lost and recovered world—once dead, now alive, and pouring out her first song of praise even from under the pall of death.

Monaldi was fortunate on the first exhibition of this picture in having for his leading critic the Cavalier S——, a philosopher and a poet, though he had never written a line as either.

"I want no surer evidence of genius than this," said he, addressing Monaldi; "you are master of the chiaro' scuro and colour, two of the most powerful instruments, I will not say of Art, but of Nature, for they were hers from her birth, though few of our painters since the time of the Caracci appear to have known it. If I do not place your

form and expression first, 'tis not that I undervalue them; they are both true and elevated; yet, with all their grandeur and power, I should still hold you wanting in one essential, had you not thus infused the human emotion into the surrounding elements. This is the poetry of the art; the highest nature. There are hours when Nature may be said to hold intercourse with man, modifying his thoughts and feelings; when man re-acts, and in his turn bends her to his will, whether by words or colours, he becomes a poet. A vulgar painter may perhaps think your work unnatural; and it must be so to him who *sees only with his eyes*. But another kind of critic is required to understand our rapt Correggio, or even—in spite of his abortive forms — the Dutch Rembrandt. These are men, whose hearts and imaginations seem to have been so dependent on each other, that I could easily conceive excess of misery might have driven them to madness."

But the Cavalier S—— was not content with admiring only, he added the picture to his collection; nor did he stop there, for he was one who could not look at a work of genius without a feeling of kindness for its author; and Monaldi was

soon enabled, through his friendship and munificence, to follow his own inclinations and give free scope to his powers.

By the aid of this generous friend, added to his own persevering industry, Monaldi's works, and consequently his fame, were soon spread throughout Italy; wealth and distinction followed of course; and, to complete his triumph, he was finally honoured with a special commission from the pope himself. In short, no artist since the time of Raffaelle ever drew after him such a train of admirers. But, with all this incense, the head and heart of Monaldi remained the same; it could not soil the pure simplicity of his character: he was still the same gentle, unassuming being.

CHAPTER II.

WHEN the friends parted, Maldura, whose course in life had long been predetermined, set out for Tuscany. His patrimony having placed him above the necessity of labouring for his subsistence, he had chosen the profession of letters: and he now selected Florence as the place most eligible for the display of his powers, and where, if not the most easy, it would at least be the most honourable to realise the future object of his ambition—the fame of a Poet. But, unlike his friend, Maldura could not find his chief reward in the pleasure of his pursuit; he did not love his art for its own sake, as the spontaneous growth of his proper nature, but rather for its contingent fruit in the applause of others.

That his reputation finally fell so far short of the measure of his ambition, could not be imputed to

the want of early encouragement, much less to any deficiency in himself of industry or confidence. He had scarcely reached his twenty-third year, when he was elected a member of the Della Crusca Academy. This premature honour seemed an earnest of the speedy fulfilling of his hopes; and it gave a lightness to his heart that persuaded him it was overflowing with benevolence. It is difficult for any man to believe this without, in some degree, acting up to his faith, and the partial testimony of his actions producing the same conviction in others. Maldura seldom received a compliment on his talents without an accompanying tribute to his virtues. But his reputation was still private; for his conversation and friendly acts were necessarily confined to his personal acquaintance. He had not as yet become the talk of the public; had heard no eager whispering as he walked the streets; marked no pointing finger as he entered the theatre; and at no conversazione had the tingling monosyllables, "That 's he!" ever once met his ear. But he consoled himself for this, by anticipating the *sensation* which his first work would not fail to produce: this was a long and elaborate poem, in which, it appeared to him, every estab-

lished rule that could apply to his subject had been strictly observed.

The poem was at length published. Alas! who that knows the heart of an author—of an aspiring one—will need be told what were the feelings of Maldura, when day after day, week after week, passed on, and still no tidings of his book. To think it had failed, was wormwood to his soul. "No, that was impossible." Still the suspense, the uncertainty of its fate, were insupportable. At last, to relieve his distress, he fastened the blame on his unfortunate publisher; though how he was in fault he knew not. Full of this thought, he was just sallying forth to vent his spleen on him, when his servant announced the Count Piccini.

"Now," thought Maldura, "I shall hear my fate;" and he was not mistaken, for the Count was a kind of talking gazette. The poem was soon introduced, and Piccini rattled on with all he had heard of it: he had lately been piqued by Maldura, and cared not to spare him.

After a few hollow professions of regard, and a careless remark about the pain it gave him to repeat unpleasant things, Piccini proceeded to pour them out one upon another with ruthless volubility.

Then, stopping as if to take breath, he continued. "I see you are surprised at all this; but indeed, my friend, I cannot help thinking it principally owing to your not having suppressed your name; for your high reputation, it seems, had raised such extravagant expectations as none but a first-rate genius could satisfy."

"By which," observed Maldura, "I am to conclude that my work has failed?"

"Why, no—not exactly that; it has only not been praised—that is, I mean in the way you might have wished. But do not be depressed; there's no knowing but the tide may yet turn in your favour."

"Then I suppose the book is hardly as yet known?"

"I beg your pardon—quite the contrary. When your friend the Marquis introduced it at his last conversazione, every one present seemed quite *au fait* on it; at least, they all talked as if they had read it."

Maldura bit his lips. "Pray who were the company?"

"Oh! all your friends, I assure you: Guattani, Martello, Pessuti, the mathematician, Alfieri, Be-

nuci, the Venetian Castelli, and the old Ferrarese Carnesecchi. These were the principal, but there were twenty others who had each something to say."

Maldura could not but perceive the malice of this enumeration; but he checked his rising choler. "Well," said he, "if I understand you, there was but one opinion respecting my poem with all this company?"

"Oh, by no means. Their opinions were as various as their characters."

"Well, Pessuti—what said he?"

"Why you know he's a mathematician, and should not regard him. But yet, to do him justice, he is a very nice critic, and not unskilled in poetry."

"Go on, sir; I can bear it."

"Why then, it was Pessuti's opinion that the poem had more learning than genius."

"Proceed, sir."

"Martello denied it both; but he, you know, is a disappointed author. Guattani differed but little from Pessuti as to its learning, but contended that you certainly showed great invention in your fable —which was like nothing that ever did or could happen. But I fear I annoy you."

"Go on, I beg, sir."

"The next who spoke was old Carnesecchi, who confessed that he had no doubt he should have been delighted with the poem, could he have taken hold of it; but it was so *en règle*, and like a hundred others, that it put him in mind of what is called a polished gentleman, who talks and bows, and slips through a great crowd without leaving any impression. Another person, whose name I have forgotten, praised the versification, but objected to the thoughts."

"Because they were absurd?"

"Oh! no, for the opposite reason — because they had all been long ago known to be good. Castelli thought that a bad reason; for his part, he said, he liked them all the better for that—it was like shaking hands with an old acquaintance in every line. Another observed, that at least no critical court could lawfully condemn them, as they could each plead an *alibi*. Not an *alibi*, said a third, but a *double*; so they should be burnt for sorcery. With all my heart, said a fourth; but not the poor author, for he has certainly satisfied us that he is no conjuror. Then Castelli—but, 'faith, I don't know how to proceed."

"You are over-delicate, sir. Speak out, I pray you."

"Well, Benuci finished by the most extravagant eulogy I ever heard—"

Maldura took breath.

"For he compared your hero to the Apollo Belvedere, your heroine to the Venus de Medicis, and your subordinate characters to the Diana, the Hercules, the Antinous, and twenty other celebrated antiques; declared them all equally well wrought and beautiful—and like them too, equally cold, hard, and motionless. In short, he maintained that you were the boldest and most original poet he had ever known; for none but a hardy genius, who consulted nobody's taste but his own, would have dared, like you, to draw his animal life from a statue-gallery, and his vegetable from a hortus siccus."

Maldura's heart stiffened within him, but his pride controlled him, and he masked his thoughts with something like composure. Yet he dared not trust himself to speak, but stood looking at Piccini, as if waiting for him to go on. "I believe that 's all," said the count, carelessly twirling his hat, and rising to take leave.

Maldura roused himself, and, making an effort, said, "No, sir, there is one person whom you have only named—Alfieri; what did he say?"

"Nothing!" Piccini pronounced this word with a graver tone than usual; it was his fiercest bolt, and he knew that a show of feeling would send it home. Then, after pausing a moment, he hurried out of the room.

Maldura sank back in his chair, and groaned in the bitterness of his spirit. "As for the wretches who make a trade of sarcasm, and whose petty self-interest would fatten on the misfortunes of a rival, I can despise them; but Alfieri—the manly, just Alfieri—to see me thus mangled, torn piecemeal before his eyes, and say *nothing!* Am I then beneath his praise? Could he not find one little spark of genius in me to kindle up his own, and consume my base assassins? No—he saw them pounce upon, and embowel me, and yet said nothing!"

Maldura closed his eyes to shut out the light of day; but neither their lids, nor the darkness of night, could shut out from his mind the hateful forms of his revilers. He saw them in their assem-

blies, on the Corso, in the coffee-houses, knotted together like fiends, and making infernal mirth with the shreds and scraps of his verses, while the vulgar rabble, quitting their games of domino, and grinning around, showed themselves but too happy to have chanced there at the sport. In fine, there are no visions of mortified ambition which did not rise up before him. But they did not subdue his pride. Yet it was near a week before he could collect sufficient courage to stir abroad; nor did he then venture till he had well settled the course he meant to pursue, namely, to treat all his acquaintance still with civility; to appear as little concerned about his failure as possible, well knowing that in proportion to his dejection would be the triumph of his enemies; but to accept no favour, and especially to have no *friend*;—a resolution which showed the true character of the man, who could not endure even kindness, unless offered as incense to his pride.

This artificial carriage had the desired effect. It silenced the flippant, and almost disarmed the malignant; while those of kinder natures saw in it only additional motives for respect; indeed there

were some even generous enough to think better of his genius for the good temper with which he seemed to bear his disappointment. In short, so quietly did he pass it off, that after a few months no one thought, or appeared to think, of Maldura as an unsuccessful author.

But it was scored in his heart, never to be forgotten; and he longed for vengeance. To effect this, however, he must first possess literary power; and that he knew could be gained only by success in writing.

But was he in a fit temper for poetry? There are some minds to which such a blow would have been death. Not such was Maldura's. He had not lost his self-confidence; and was willing to ascribe his failure to anything but his own deficiency: to the jealousy of his rivals, to their influence over the many; to the general apathy to his particular subject; nay, even to his originality, and to the common fear of praising what is new: so that instead of weakening, it tended rather to strengthen his powers. He had two works on hand, a satiric poem, and a tragedy; with the first he could now go on *con amore*, having no lack of

wit, and being now surcharged with gall; and that no one might suspect him as the author, he determined to go to Rome, and send it thence, under a feigned name, to Florence.

The poem was soon finished, and sent from Rome accordingly. About a month after, he received two letters, one bearing his assumed name and the other his real one. He tore them open as a hawk would a sparrow. Glancing at the signature of that in his own name, he read "Piccini." He was about to dash it to the ground when his eye caught the following words: "The whole town rings with the praises of this unknown poet. Every body talks of, and admires him; even Benuci commends, without a dash of irony." Maldura grinned with triumph. "Wretch!" said he, crushing the letter, "you know not that the man whom you would wound with the praise of another is himself that other. But the Count Piccini shall one day know the satirist better." The other letter was from his bookseller, informing him of the rapid sale and complete success of his work, and enclosing a complimentary sonnet from Castelli.

Though Maldura had fixed his eye upon a far

higher mark than the reputation of a mere satirist, which he held almost in disdain in comparison with that to which his genius was entitled, at any rate as insufficient for his ambition,—he was yet for the present content to enjoy his triumph, and it pleased him to regard it as an earnest of the success of his tragedy.

CHAPTER III.

MALDURA was now comparatively gay of heart, and mixed again with society. The reputation of his learning procured him the same attentions in Rome as in Florence; and as there had been no outward change in him, he had no difficulty in making acquaintance.

Among the most cordial of these new friends was a distinguished advocate, a near relation of the pope, of the name of Landi. He had taken a particular pleasure in Maldura's conversation, and had often invited him to his house; but Maldura, with the perverseness which now began to be the rule of his conduct, had as often declined these invitations, and for the very reason that would have induced another to accept them—because they were really cordial. He was greedy of admirers, but his growing habit of distrust shrunk from inti-

macy. In a moment of caprice, however, he at last went.

The advocate received his guest with great heartiness, and introduced him to his daughter with such encomiums as plainly marked him a favourite.

It was impossible for any one to look upon Rosalia Landi with indifference. Her beauty was of a kind which might be called universal—at least in effect, for it was difficult to determine whether it were more striking or winning; whether it lay more in the just proportion and harmony of her features, or in the exquisite and ever-varying expression that played over them.

For the first time in his life Maldura's heart was touched. Hitherto he had regarded woman merely as belonging to the regular materials of poetry; had examined and analysed their charms, only to class and describe them. Now he neither studied nor thought of studying; he could only feel that the object before him was lovely; and he felt too with surprise that her beauty and mind, as they each alternately won his admiration, each gave him pain almost proportioned to his pleasure. For a short time these contending emotions perplexed

him; but a glance into his heart explained all — she was the first woman with whose fate he had ever felt a wish to unite his own. From that moment Maldura marked her for himself.

Yet, sudden as was his love, it was not wholly unmixed. Wherever there is a ruling passion, the affections naturally become subordinate, and take their colour from that; they have no singleness of feeling towards any object, and can have no sympathy with any except as it ministers to the paramount appetite. It was so with Maldura. The beauty of Rosalia no sooner touched his heart than it mounted to his brain. He saw her in fancy gracing his future triumphs, and himself, through her, the proud object of envy; then her father's interest, his high connexions, and their influence, all passed in array before him, to make straight and easy the opening road of his ambition.

Every time Maldura repeated his visit, the stronger became these motives, and the more confirmed his love, till at last, thus mingling with all his hopes of distinction, the image of Rosalia took such hold on his heart, that he could never think of the one without calling up the other.

A few weeks after, Maldura waited on the advo-

cate to solicit permission to address his daughter. It was readily granted, and in the most flattering manner. Landi added, that he "should have his good word, but for the result he must refer him to his child."

However sagacious in other things, there is generally in proud men a remarkable obtuseness as to matters of the heart, which often leads them astray where they feel most confident; their habit of looking at everything through the misty medium of self-love, prevents their distinguishing those minute degrees of good-will, esteem, respect, and so on to exclusive preference, with which a delicate woman graduates her manner towards those of the other sex. But that which obscures the distinctive shades of objects enlarges their outlines; hence little attentions are easily mistaken for something more, and, where often repeated, their bare accumulation soon grows to what is mistaken for love. Maldura was troubled with no doubts about the issue of his suit: how it terminated may be gathered from a part of a conversation between Rosalia and her father.

"So far, Rosalia," said her father, "you have answered well; you have done Maldura justice.

But why stop with his talents? can you find nothing more to commend?"

Rosalia still continued silent.

"You surely cannot object to his person?"

"Certainly not; I have rarely seen one so handsome."

"Perhaps you dislike his manners?"

"On the contrary, I think them uncommonly agreeable: his address, too, is even more than polished, 'tis refined; and his powers of entertaining I believe are entirely his own."

"Very well! Go on, my dear.—Nay, why again silent? I fear—say—have you heard anything against his morals?"

"Nothing."

"Or do you object to his disposition?"

"I know nothing of his disposition, and cannot therefore form any opinion of it."

"Have a care, Rosalia; there is no species of detraction more hard and cutting than an icy negative."

"My dear father, for worlds I would not think evil—if I could help it."

"Then you cannot help thinking ill of his disposition?"

"I did not say so. I am willing to believe it good till I have proved to the contrary."

"As yet?"

"Not a shadow of one."

"Then I am satisfied; for I believe it to be generous and noble. And I believe, also, that my child is too just to harbour any degree of dislike without cause."

Rosalia bowed in assent.

Landi proceeded: "Well, then, since you highly approve of most of his qualities, and object to none, what prevents my dear daughter——Do not be alarmed, Rosalia; I am a father, not a tyrant. I am, besides, now an old man, and have no other hold on the world but in you; and in guarding you from ill, and leading you to good, I am only consulting my own happiness."

"Dearest father!" said Rosalia, "I know, I feel your goodness; you have ever been the best of parents; and I should think myself unworthy any blessing could I wilfully cause you a moment's pain."

"I believe it, Rosalia. Neither should I think better of myself were I disposed to enforce my own will at the expense of your quiet. Now that we

understand each other, let me speak plainly. Signor Maldura has this morning asked permission to address you. I will not trouble you by repeating my opinion of his merits; you already know it, and know that it could not well be higher. Need I say after this that it would please me to call him my son?—that I think him, of all the men I have known, the *very* man to make my daughter happy?—Will you not speak, Rosalia?"

"Oh, father!" cried Rosalia, throwing her arms round his neck.

"Be calm, my child. Let us be rational."

Landi led her to a chair, and taking a seat by her, continued: "I know, my dear Rosalia—at least I think I know, the cause of your reluctance. You have a tincture of romance in you, which is natural enough at your age; and you have formed, I doubt not, certain peculiar notions of love which you hope one day to realise. You have now just glanced into your heart, and have found in it (as is very probable) nothing like them. I should have been surprised if you had; for a real lover is not half so accommodating as one of the brain. But the shadows of a youthful imagination pass away with youth. Then comes a sense of the substantial

and real; and with it a wondering that we could ever have rejected even the humblest every-day qualities of the heart and understanding for these brilliant nothings. It may seem hard to ask you, who are yet young, to choose between them. But if I ask it, it is not to give up even your fancies for any commonplace reality. The qualities of Maldura are as rare as real. And if he has not yet thrilled you with any of those tender emotions—those pleasing pains—which your imagination may have taught you to associate with love, do not therefore think him the less fitted to make you happy. Had he even inspired them, they could not last; a few months, or a few weeks, would bring them to an end. Not so will it be with the qualities he now offers for your regard; and not so would you find it, when courted and honoured as the wife of the first genius of the age."

"My dear father," said Rosalia, "I would that I could reason on the subject, but — indeed I cannot."

"Strange! You hint not even an objection, and yet—Do you think I overrate him?"

"No; he deserves all you say of him; but yet—"

"You would still reject him?"

Rosalia was silent.

"If you esteem, you may certainly love; nay, it will follow of course."

"Did you *always* think so, sir?"

"Perhaps not. When I was young, I was no doubt fanciful, like others."

"And yet you did not marry till past thirty."

"Well, child?"

"My mother died when I was too young to know her; but I have heard her character so often from yourself and others, that I have it now as fresh before me as if she had never been taken from us. Was she not mild and gentle?"

"As the dew of heaven."

"And her mind?"

"The seat of every grace and virtue."

"And her person too was beautiful?"

"Except yourself, I have never seen a creature so lovely."

"And did she make you a *good* wife?"

Landi turned pale. "Rosalia—my child—why remind me, by these cruel questions, of a loss which the whole world cannot repair?"

"She was then all you wished; and yet I have heard that yours was a *love-match*."

"No more," cried Landi, averting his face. "You have conquered."

Rosalia pressed his hand to her lips.

"No, my child," said her father, after a few minutes, "though my head is old, I find that my heart is still young as ever. I will not tempt you to a lukewarm vow: you are a living counterpart of her who would have rejected a monarch for your father—like her, too, you shall choose according to the impulse of your own pure heart."

Landi, wishing to save his friend pain, lost no time in communicating the result of this conference. When Maldura heard it, he stood for a moment like one suddenly waked from sleep, doubting if the words, which still echoed in his ears, were really those of another person, or the mere coinage of his brain. But it was only for a moment; the compassionate tone of Landi, his look of sympathy, and the tremulous pressure of his hand, soon convinced him of their reality. Yet even then he doubted; not that he had heard them, but of their truth; he doubted Landi's sincerity, and thought it a contrivance to rid himself decently of the connexion. This suspicion brought the whole man into his face; but he constrained

himself to be civil, whilst he persisted in refusing to take any denial but from the lady herself. Landi, finding it in vain to remonstrate, at last consented that Maldura should wait on Rosalia the next morning.—The interview was short and decisive. But never was refusal uttered with more gentleness and delicacy. And never did rejected lover hear his own merits more eloquently set forth than did Maldura, even when the lips of Rosalia pronounced his doom. "Blame not my will," she concluded, "but—if anything—my heart, that knows no control but from its own wayward fancies."

The character of Rosalia was of that nice mixture of softness and firmness which makes the perfection of woman. The first she derived from nature; the last was the result of principle; and while from the one she was open to every impression of the affections, the regular watchfulness of the other effectually guarded her from all that would not stand its scrutiny. This moral subordination, or rather just balance between sense and sensibility, not unfrequently subjected her, with superficial observers, to the imputation of coldness. But hers was the coldness of her better judgment,

only occasional, and always with a purpose. When her heart was opened, and with the sanction of her principles, the whole woman gave way at once.

It was, no doubt, the consciousness of her disposition to this prodigal self-abandonment of the heart, that first led her to seek a less fallacious guide than her own sanguine impulses. Happily her father's instructions here came to her aid; and as Landi was a man of sincere piety, it may readily be inferred that the guide she found in them was religion. Hence that high standard of excellence by which she was accustomed to measure all that approached her.

CHAPTER IV.

Had Maldura loved Rosalia Landi for herself, the manner in which she had rejected him would have exalted her still more in his estimation. But with the loss of her person came a blight on his hopes of distinction. Though he still felt the same confidence in his own powers, yet he could not bear to forego all those advantages which he had so long counted on from his union with Rosalia; and he hated her as one who had scattered a glorious vision of ambition which her sorcery had called up as if but to mock him. But, whatever his rage, or hopes of revenge, the fortune of his tragedy, which was now on its way to Florence, soon drove her from his mind. He had laid out his whole strength on this performance, sparing neither time nor labour, and giving to it the highest finish; so that when he sent it he felt that

he had done his best, and that should it fail, it would be from some fatality which he could not control: it was his last stake, and he was willing to rest his all upon it; for the more he considered it, whether in the whole or in parts, the better he was satisfied that it could not fail.

The success of his satire immediately procured the tragedy a good reception at the theatre; it was already announced for representation, and Maldura had only to wait for the decision of the public. He did not wait long; the fate of the play soon reached him: it had fallen dead on the boards the first night. So wrote the manager.

This was an unlooked-for blow; and he sat for near an hour gazing upon the manager's letter, as if endeavouring to recall, he knew not what; for its purport was gone ere hardly known. But his recollection soon returned. Better had it not, than so to make visible the utter desolation within him —to show him a mind without home or object; for he could look neither back nor forward. If he looked to the future, in place of the splendid visions that once rose like a mirage, he beheld a desert; if he turned to the past, his laborious realities, once seeming so gorgeous, now left with-

out purpose, only cumbered the ground with their heavy ruins.

In this hopeless state, however, there was one comforter which never deserted him—his indomitable pride; it was this sustained him. Had a shadow of self-distrust but crossed Maldura for a moment, it might have darkened to insanity; but no doubts of his genius had ever entered his mind; he was therefore an ill-used man, and he hated the world which had thus withheld his just rights. His only solace now was in the wretched resource of the misanthrope—in that childish revenge which in the folly of his anger, he imagines himself taking on the world, by foregoing its kindnesses; for there is small difference between a thorough misanthrope and a sullen child; indeed their *illogical* wrath generally takes the same course in both, namely, to retort an injury by spiting themselves. For the full indulgence of this miserable temper, he retired to an unfrequented part of the city; and, rarely venturing out except at night, it was generally concluded that he had quitted Rome—where he was soon forgotten.

CHAPTER V.

It was about two years after the events recorded in the preceding chapter, that Monaldi arrived in Rome; where his reception was such as might have amply satisfied him, had he been far more ambitious of popular admiration. To say, however, that he was wholly insensible to praise, would not be true; so far as he believed it an expression of sympathy, it was justly valued, nay, it was then most dear to him as one of the graces of our social nature; nor did he affect an indifference to that posthumous sympathy with excellence—that purest form of fame to which so many noble minds, under poverty and neglect, have patiently looked—and looked, alas! for their only reward. Yet the love of fame was less a passion with Monaldi than the result of a sober law of his mind, which won his obedience, because it carried with it the assurance

of an enduring nature. But he had no craving for distinction, much less for notoriety, or what is popularly called reputation; indeed, he had passed over the graves of too many buried reputations not to have learned how their common tenure, the fashion of one age, is valued by another.

With such an artist it cannot be supposed that a mere adulator of his name could have found much favour, nor, when it is added that Monaldi's was one of those kindly natures to which the duty of repelling is at all times painful, will it be thought singular that a person of this description should have been to him an object of especial annoyance. It was to escape from one of these unmeaning flatterers, who seldom failed to fasten upon him whenever they met, that Monaldi one day turned into a gateway in an obscure street, where one of his figure was rarely seen. The passage leading from it was somewhat dark, and he hoped to conceal himself there till his persecutor had passed, when he observed a person from within coming towards him. The awkwardness of his situation obliged him either to retreat, or to explain it, and he spoke. "Your pardon, Signor—I pray you excuse this intrusion." The stranger started. "Nay," added

Monaldi, " it will be but for a moment. In truth I am an unlucky artist, who would merely avoid a troublesome acquaintance."

" Begone !" said the stranger.

" Good heaven !" cried Monaldi, " sure that voice"—But the stranger had disappeared.

" It is—it must be," said he, and without further thought he entered the court. They were now under the open sky. The stranger stopped,—and Monaldi beheld his long-lost friend.

" Maldura !"—was all his full heart could utter.

Maldura spoke not a word; but he suffered his hand to remain passively within the grasp of his friend.

" I see 'tis with you as myself," said Monaldi at last. " But how can words add to the joy of this meeting?"

" Words !—True—they are idle." Maldura was no hypocrite, and his manly spirit revolted at expressing what he did not feel—and what he felt his heart was not yet hard enough to utter. Yet something must be said—and that neither unkind nor hollow. " You look well, Monaldi; even better than when we parted at Bologna."

" That 's a long time—very long," said Monaldi.

"Yet, long as it is, I need hardly tell Maldura that I could not recall many days when he has been out of my mind — especially since I lost trace of you. But where have you been all this while? you know not how many ill bodings I have had on account of your strange disappearance— no letters — no clue. Sometimes I thought you might have embarked for Spain, as you once talked of doing, and been shipwrecked; then in a more cheerful mood, I would suppose you voluntarily banished to some quiet solitude, that you might give your whole mind to some great work; for I remembered your favourite maxim, that the sacrifice of a whole life were but a cheap price for fame. Then again my apprehensions would take the worst conclusion—that you had been robbed and murdered. Tell me, where have you been? what have you been doing?"

"'Tis of little consequence," replied Maldura. "The past is past, and the wisdom of Solomon could not make it better or worse: let it rest then."

"Nay, I would not ask you to recall what might give you pain, deeply as I am interested."

"I did not say it would give me pain; I said it was useless."

"I would know then no more than will give you pleasure. So we will talk of what remains of the past. Your active mind cannot have been idle, and the world expects much of you."

"The world!" This was touching a galled spot. Maldura's eyes flashed; but a smile of fiercer scorn succeeded. "We will talk of the world when it shall have become worth something better than an idiot's slaver. But for ourselves—we shall be better in the house: 'tis not a palace, as you see, but 'twill afford us shelter from the sun."

"You know I am not dainty," answered Monaldi; "or if I were, the place would be the last thing I should think of at this time."

"I was not apologising for it," said Maldura, somewhat proudly; "the knaves and fools that live in palaces might reconcile a wise man to one much worse."

"Maldura's mind," said Monaldi—and he said it in a tone that spoke anything but abatement of his youthful reverence—"such a mind would dignify any palace."

Maldura's heart softened in spite of himself. He hated the world, but not its praise; and he led

the way into the house with less reluctance than he had expected.

When the friends left school, they had engaged to write to each other, and their correspondence had continued with little interruption up to the time of Maldura's first failure; when, from the fear of betraying the secret misery occasioned by that event, he discontinued it. Since then, Monaldi had never heard any tidings of his friend, except that he had quitted Florence, but for what part of the world he could never learn. Maldura, however, had long been apprised of all the other's movements, his success, and fame; but the more he heard of them, the less did he incline to renew their intimacy: indeed the contrast which they formed to his own situation was among the sorest aggravations of his misery. Had it been a stranger —any other man—so courted and followed, he thought he could have borne it; but to find an object of envy in his humble schoolfellow, on whom he had once looked down, was a degradation which he could not forgive.

With feelings like these, it is not surprising that Maldura forbore to seek out his friend; nor, when accident had brought them together, and he recog-

nised his voice in the gateway, that he should have sought to avoid him. But his heart was not yet entirely hardened, and his late interview with Monaldi had touched it. Yet so new seemed to him the consciousness of any kind feeling, that it was a considerable time after Monaldi's departure before he could realise what had passed; and then he felt as if something had gone from him which he hardly knew whether to regret or not. With one thing, however, he was satisfied: that his friend had conceived no suspicion of the change in his heart; for, proud as he was, Maldura had still a secret coveting of the esteem of others: so that, upon the whole, he almost doubted if he were sorry for the meeting. In fact, he was much better pleased than he was willing to admit: for however a misanthrope may pride himself on the sovereignty of his hatred, as long as he continues in this world, he can never so entirely destroy his social nature but that some leaven of it will work within him.

The intercourse thus renewed between the two friends could not but differ in many respects from that of their earlier years. Monaldi, however, hailed it as a promise of many pleasures. His

affectionate disposition had long felt the want of a friend; but his studious habits, added to his natural reserve, had hitherto prevented his forming any second intimacy; and he now dwelt with delight on the thought of pouring out his heart into the bosom of his early friend. But he soon found that Maldura was not that open, social being he had once known—that he had become cold, absent and gloomy: though the change grieved him and repressed his confidence, it did not lesson his attachment; and ascribing it to some secret sorrow, he imagined that his sympathy was more than ever needed. His efforts, however, were in vain,—the same distant, taciturn demeanour continued to repel every act of kindness.

It is the natural consequence of a fruitless endeavour to alleviate the afflictions of those who are dear to us, to become ourselves partakers of their sufferings. And if the cause of our pain be not hateful, we feel, or rather fancy that we shall feel, relieved, the nearer we are to it. Monaldi's visits to his friend, however, were seldom followed by the effect he desired; being for the most part passed in mutual silence, or in a few common remarks on indifferent topics.

It was after a morning of more than usual depression and concern on his account, that Monaldi one day called on his unhappy friend. Maldura's apathy seemed for the moment overcome; and he could not help expressing surprise at such an unwonted visit; for it was scarcely past mid-day, and he knew that nothing short of necessity could tempt the devoted artist to leave his studio at that hour. Monaldi simply replied, that he had felt indisposed to work; and he drew a chair to a window. The apartment being in an upper story, and the house somewhat elevated, commanded an extensive view of the southern portion of the city, overlooking the Campo Vaccino, once the ancient forum, with its surrounding ruins, and taking in a part of the Coliseum. The air was hot and close, and there was a thin yellow haze over the distance like that which precedes the scirocco, but the nearer objects were clear and distinct, and so bright that the eye could hardly rest on them without quivering, especially on the modern buildings, with their huge sweep of whited walls, and their red-tiled roofs, that lay burning in the sun, while the sharp, black shadows, which here and there seemed to indent the dazzling masses, might

almost have been fancied the cinder-tracks of his fire. The streets of Rome, at no time very noisy, are for nothing more remarkable than, during the summer months, for their noontide stillness, the meridian heat being frequently so intense as to stop all business, driving everything within-doors, with the proverbial exception of dogs and strangers. But even these might scarcely have withstood the present scorching atmosphere. It was now high noon, and the few straggling vine-dressers that were wont to stir in this secluded quarter had already been driven under shelter; not a vestige of life was to be seen, not a bird on the wing, and so deep was the stillness that a solitary foot-fall might have filled the whole air; neither was this stillness lessened by the presence of the two friends—for nothing so deepens silence as man at rest; they had both sat mutely gazing from the window, and apparently unconscious of the lapse of time, till the bell of a neighbouring church warned them of it.

"Yes," said Monaldi—as if the sound had suddenly loosed his tongue—"there *is* a chain that runs through all things. How else should the mind hear the echo of its workings from voiceless

rocks? Mysterious union! that our very lives should seem but so many reflections from the face of nature; and all about us but visible types of the invisible man! Even the works of man, the passive combinations of his hand—they too have found a tongue in the elements, and become oracular to his heart—even as that proud pile of Titus, so dark and desolate within, now speaks from without, in the gorgeous language of the sun, to mine. Look, Maldura: here is to me a book of history and prophecy. You see in that distant mist the prefigurement of my future: for my present state you need but look beneath us—on this oppressive splendour; but for the past—thank heaven, that is still mine—the blessed past! how soothingly it speaks to me in this humble shade!"

Maldura's distorted vision saw nothing in this but a covert sally of pride, and a half-suppressed sneer passed over his features; but his confiding friend gave it a different name.

"You seem incredulous—why should you doubt that I look on the past with envy?"

"Some," answered Maldura, "might think that it needed at least faith; especially to believe it of

the favourite of popes and cardinals—for you look back to obscurity."

"But not *you*, Maldura. For you know that that obscurity was happy—because those I loved were happy; and because in them I had a true home for all my wishes; for we build not for ourselves alone—at least anything that can satisfy, or is worthy the heart; and mine was never subordinate to the head. Others, who remember nothing of my youth but its reserve, might perhaps doubt it; but not you. If I was reserved, you well know it was neither from coldness nor gloom; but that I was so moulded by early and severe misfortunes. I was left an orphan ere I hardly knew the blessing of kindred. This was the first misfortune. Then followed another. That my scanty patrimony might be husbanded, I was doomed to waste the first ten years of my life amongst illiterate boors—though, to do them justice, they were honest. And, though unlettered then myself, the thousand obscure longings, and "deep and anxious questionings," on what I saw and felt, which everywhere haunted me, and which no one could resolve or satisfy, soon discovered to me that I had but little in common with those about me; nay, the

very expression of my thoughts was often answered by a laugh, or by the nicknames of idiot and dreamer. You cannot wonder then that I shrunk into myself, nor that I at length became indeed a dreamer; for my whole world was within me, and would have been so now but for one being—bless her memory! That being was my sister."

Monaldi here appeared to be overcome by some tender recollection; but after a moment's pause he proceeded, as if in continuation of his thoughts. "No, it would be selfish to wish her back. You remember her, Maldura?"

The question seemed to rouse Maldura from his abstraction, and he raised his eyes with a vacant look. But, wishing to avoid an explanation, he nodded in assent.

"It was in my twelfth year that we met for the first time since my infancy; for you may remember that she had been brought up by a distant relation at Modena. What a strange faculty is this memory! I can see her now almost as distinctly as if she were before me. She was only five years older than myself, and yet when she kissed me and looked upon me, it was with such a maternal look —and she inquired about my little concerns in

a tone so solicitous, so tender, that I could never from that hour either think or speak of her but with the veneration of a son.—Yes," continued Monaldi, while the recollection seemed to give a deeper fervour to his manner—"it was she first taught me that I had a heart—and too large for self: who made it the companion, nay, controller, of my intellect, giving it direction and purpose; and it was her praise that made me long for fame; for I felt that it would make her happy. But she was taken from me before the world knew that such a candidate for its praise was in being, or she herself had anything to dwell on save the prophetic visions which her sisterly love had travelled for into the future. But it is right, all right—she is happier where she is. I need not name the other being who came to supply her loss — nor how kindly! Even now too I can see the stone seat in our play-yard, at Bologna—that good seat—associated with so many nameless acts of kindness, which no one can understand but an orphan boy; and one as sensitive as desolate, and left to the cold, boisterous gaiety of a public school. Yes, Maldura, you alone in the wide world seemed to feel for my loss; and in that you did so you

became to me more than the world. I exulted in your talents; I grew proud of the prizes you won; and I looked to your future fame even with my poor sister's eyes, when she looked to mine. Why the last has not been realised I marvel—that such a mind—"

Maldura ground his teeth.

Monaldi saw the change in his countenance, and stopped: then added, "If I have touched on what is displeasing to you, forgive me. And yet it cannot be that the expression of a regret so natural—"

"The less that is said of it the better," said Maldura, with a bitter smile. "As for yourself—*you* have the world's trumpet. Keep it—I would none of its blast; 'tis made up of the breath of fools, or it may be, knaves. Keep it then, and be content. Good or bad, 'tis yours, they say; and will be, even when the grave shall have walled up your ears."

"No, Maldura—you have forgotten, or you mistake, my heart, if you think that fame alone can fill it. The very retrospect I have just made is proof enough. Why else should I dwell on scenes that are past, and quit the palpable present, to commune with shadows? But I miscall them; they are

shadows only to my bodily eyes—to my affections they are substance—in effect the truest, so long as through the mysterious memory they can give that thrilling play of life which present realities deny. No; the solitude of neglect were better borne than solitary grandeur. We are not made to enjoy alone—least of all things fame; 'tis a fierce splendour, that needs to be conducted off by others; if it rest with ourselves, it becomes a fire that, sooner or later, must shrivel up the heart. Had I parent or kindred—could the grave give me back such sharers of my fame—but I will not think of it. Or —would you, Maldura—"

Maldura started from his seat.

"Again forgive me," said Monaldi; "I ought not so to obtrude my regrets upon you."

Maldura turned from him as if he would hear no more; then, stopping awhile, said, "You have had your marvel; so too may I. If you count fame nothing, why do you toil?"

"Because I could not be idle and live; and because I love my art for its own sake. I should still paint, had I the means, were I thrown on a desolate island."

"Yet you have one thing, which many in the

world would think included all—wealth: though some indeed have called it trash — at least in books."

"And do *you* think so, Maldura? I know you do not. Yet—" the thought now glanced on Monaldi that his friend might be suffering from poverty; his face lighted up, and he grasped Maldura's hand.

"What is it disturbs you?" said Maldura, coldly withdrawing his hand.

"Disturb! oh no! I owe you a thousand thanks for this discovery. How could I have been so blind! This obscure retreat, these sorry lodgings, speak it but too plainly."

"Speak what?" asked Maldura, in amazement.

"Your secret. 'Tis now mine."

The blood rushed to Maldura's forehead, and he felt as if he could have annihilated himself, Monaldi, and all who had ever known him.

"And it has made me happy," added Monaldi; "for now I have something to live for."

The conclusion of this sentence relieved Maldura from the horror of his suspicion, but it left him still perplexed for its meaning.

Monaldi continued. "But why should I waste

time in useless words? You have unwittingly betrayed the cause of your distress, Maldura; and, pardon me that I rejoice at it. You suffer from the want of that 'trash' with which fortune has overwhelmed, nay, oppressed me. Let me then put it to its right use, to the service of genius and virtue; and where do these live purer and nobler than in Maldura? Speak then, and say, that you will allow me to call the moiety of it yours."

As Maldura listened, his face became of an ashy paleness, his lips quivered, and his knees shook. "Pshaw!" said he; and he instantly recovered himself.

Monaldi was about to repeat his offer, when suddenly turning upon him, Maldura gave him a look—such a look!—Monaldi felt as if it had passed through him.

"Nay, what's the matter?" said Maldura, while a half compunctious feeling brought the blood back to his cheek.

"Tell me, have I offended you, Maldura?"

"No. Though I do not jump at your offer, you must not think it offends me; for, indeed, I ought to—that is—I *do* thank you. But—"

"Do not say that you decline it."

"I must: for I am above want."

"In spirit—"

"Ay, and in purse too."

"Then I will press you no further," said Monaldi.

A silence of several minutes followed.

"I fear," said Maldura at last, "I fear that I have not appeared so sensible to your kindness as I ought to be; but, I am rather unwell to-day—indeed hardly myself—you will therefore pardon it."

"Nay," returned Monaldi, "if you *did* appear a little proud of your independence, I ought not to blame you: though you should not have thought that your sharing *my* useless pelf would have made you the less free."

"But I *do* thank you. Will you not believe it?"

"I do," said Monaldi, "from the bottom of my soul."

Maldura grasped his hand, and, pausing a moment, added, in a hollow voice, "Monaldi! you have indeed a noble heart; and you deserve—yes, you deserve—all you possess." He then turned away, and passed into another room.

"Alas!" thought Monaldi, as he walked home-

ward, "I fear his brain is unsettled." The thought sunk into his heart, and seemed to fix his friend there more firmly than ever.

"I have *said* it!" said Maldura, when alone. "Yes, it went from me in spite of— Oh, that I had bestowed that word, so justly merited, on any other man. But I have said it: and—true, it ought to have been said." Then, as if he would flee from his thoughts, or, rather, return to his wonted mood by a change of place, he snatched up his hat, and hurried into the street; he had no choice whither, but the half-formed wish led him mechanically to the desolate Baths of Caracalla. These baths had long been his favourite haunt, for there was something in their ruins he felt akin with his fortunes, and he would often spend whole days and nights there, sometimes sitting in their dark recesses, and given up to misery, and sometimes wandering to and fro, as if inhaling a kind of savage refreshment from walking over the wreck of prouder piles than his own.

CHAPTER VI.

It should have been mentioned in a former part of this narrative, that among the honours bestowed on our artist, soon after his arrival in Rome, was the title of principal painter to the pope; which was immediately followed by an order for a series of pictures for the pontifical palace at Monte Cavallo. These works, which had occupied him for several years, being now completed, so added to his fame, that commissions flowed upon him from all quarters, insomuch that he was obliged to decline many from other distinguished personages both at home and abroad. But there was one order which he would have gladly declined for other reasons, yet, coming from the pontiff, it was a virtual command, and he was fain to accept it, though with more reluctance than the world might believe of one so flattered; this was a "*companion*" picture to

a Madonna, by Raffaelle. His notions were perhaps peculiar; but we give them here as indicative of his character.

He "accepted the commission," he said, "not with the arrogant hope of producing a rival to the picture of Raffaelle, but in grateful compliance with the wishes of his patron." Besides, with a just reverence for his art, he looked upon all competition as unworthy a true artist; nay, he even doubted whether any one could command the power of his own genius whilst his mind was under the influence of so vulgar a motive. "For what," he would say, "is that which you call my genius, but the love and perception of *excellence*—the twin power that incites and directs to successful production?—which can never co-exist with the desire to diminish, or even to contend with, that in another. It would be rather self-love than a true love of excellence, did I value it less in Raffaelle than in myself." He might have added another reason: that competition implying comparison, and comparison a difference only of *degree*, could not *really* exist between men of genius; since the individualising power by which we recognise genius, or the originating faculty, must necessarily mark their

several productions by a difference in *kind*. But he needed not this deduction of the understanding; his own lofty impulses placed him on surer ground.

Having accepted the commission, however, it was necessary that he should see the picture which he was expected to equal; he accordingly waited on the gentleman to whose collection it belonged, and was shown into his gallery. Though Monaldi had heard much of this collection, he found that report had for once fallen far short of the truth; and the pleasure of such a surprise to him may be imagined by those who have witnessed the effect of unexpected excellence on a man of genius.

He had expected to see only a fine Raffaelle; but he now found himself surrounded by the master spirits of Rome and Venice: they seemed to bewilder him with delight, and he was wandering from one to another, as if uncertain where to rest, when, passing a door at the end of the gallery, his eyes fell on an object to which every other immediately gave place. It was the form of a young female who was leaning, or rather bending, over the back of a chair, and reading. At first he saw only its general loveliness, and he gazed on it as on a more beautiful picture, till a slight movement

suddenly gave it a new character—it was the quickening grace that gives life to symmetry. There is a charm in life which no pencil can reach —it thrilled him. But when he caught a glimpse of the half-averted face, the pearly forehead, gleaming through clusters of black glossy hair—the lustrous, intellectual line beneath, just seen through the half-closed eyelids—the tremulously-parted lips, and the almost visible soul that seemed to rush from them upon the page before her—even the wonders of his art appeared like idle mockeries. The eyes of the reader now turned upon him. Still he continued to gaze, and to give way to his new and undefined emotions, till the thought of his intrusion suddenly crossed him, and his face crimsoned. How far the embarrassment may have been shared by Rosalia Landi (for she it was), was hardly known to herself, as the entrance of her father immediately restored her to her usual self-possession.

"It gives us no common pleasure, Signor Monaldi," said the Advocate, as he presented him to his daughter, "that we have this opportunity to make some acknowledgment for the many happy hours we owe to you. I may add, that I use the

epithet in no indefinite sense; for when is the mind more innocent than while it loses itself in a pure work of genius?—and mere freedom from evil should be happiness: but your art effects more—it unites innocence with pleasure."

"We owe Signor Monaldi much indeed," said Rosalia, bowing.

Monaldi had none of that spurious modesty which affects to shrink from praise when conscious of deserving it; yet he could make no reply.

Without noticing his silence, Landi observed, that perhaps he ought to apologise for the length of his absence. "And yet," he added, turning to the pictures, "I cannot honestly say that I regret it, since it has left Signor Monaldi more at liberty to form a fair opinion: for I am connoisseur enough to know that the first impression of a picture is seldom aided by words—especially those of a fond collector. The pictures I doubt not have fared all the better without me."

They now stood before the Raffaelle, and the Advocate waited for several minutes for his visitor to speak; but Monaldi's thoughts had no connection with his senses; he saw nothing, though his eyes were apparently fixed on the picture, but

the beautiful vision that still possessed his imagination.

"Perhaps report may have overrated it," at length said Landi, in something like a tone of disappointment.

"Or probably," added Rosalia, observing the blankness of his countenance, "our favourite Madonna may not be one with Signor Monaldi."

"It is *your* favourite then?" said Monaldi, with a sudden change of expression. He had no time to think of the abruptness of this question before Rosalia replied,—

"And we had hoped too of yours: for it is natural to wish our opinions confirmed by those who have a right to direct them."

"Nay," said Monaldi, "Raffaelle is one whom criticism can affect but little either way. He speaks to the heart, a part of us that never mistakes a meaning: and they who have one to understand should ask nothing in liking him but the pleasure of sympathy."

"And yet there are many technical beauties," said the Advocate, "which an unpractised eye needs to have pointed out."

"Yes—and faults too," answered Monaldi;

"but his execution makes only a small part of that by which he affects us. But had he even the colour of Titian, or the magic chiaro-scuro of Correggio, they would scarcely add to that sentient spirit with which our own communes. I have certainly seen more beautiful faces; we sometimes meet them in nature—faces to look at, and with pleasure—but not to think of like this. Besides, Raffaelle does more than make us think of him; he makes us forget his deficiencies—or, rather, supply them."

"I think I understand you—when the heart is touched, but a hint is enough," said Rosalia.

"Ay," said the Advocate, smiling, "'tis with pictures as with life; only bribe that invisible *finisher*, and we are sure to reach perfection. However, since there is no other human way to perfection of any kind, I do not see that it is unwise to allow the illusion — which certainly elevates us while it lasts; for we cannot have a sense of the perfect, though imaginary, while we admit ignoble thoughts."

"This is a great admission for you, sir," said Rosalia; "'tis the best apology for romance I have heard."

"Is it? Well, child, then I have been romantic myself without knowing it. But the picture before us—"

"I could not forget it if I would," interrupted Monaldi, with excitement. "That single-hearted, that ineffable look of love! yet so pure and passionless—so like what we may believe of the love of angels. It seems as if I had never before known the power of my art."

As he spoke, his eyes unconsciously wandered to Rosalia. The charm was there; and his art was now as much indebted to the living presence, as a little before it had suffered from it.

"If one may judge from his works," said Rosalia, "Raffaelle must have been a very amiable man."

"We have no reason to think otherwise," answered Monaldi. "He at least *knew how* to be so: if he was not, his self-reproach must have been no small punishment, if at all proportioned to his exquisite perception of moral beauty. But he was all you believe, according to the testimony of his contemporaries, by whom he appears to have been as much beloved as admired."

"I could wish," said Rosalia, "that tradition

had spared us either more or less of the great author of that Prophet,"—they had turned to a cartoon by Michael Angelo. "They say he was morose; and many affect to find in that the reason why he does not touch the heart. Yet, I know not how it is, whether he stirs the heart or not, there is *a something* in his works that so lifts one above our present world, or at least, which so raises one above all ordinary emotions, that I never quit the Sistine Chapel without feeling it impossible to believe any charge to his discredit."

"Never believe it," said Monaldi, with energy. "He had too great a soul—too rapt for an unkind feeling. If he did not often sympathise with those about him, it was because he had but little in common with them. Not that he had less of passion, but more of the intellectual. His heart seems to have been so sublimated by his imagination, that his too refined affections, I can almost believe, sought a higher sphere—even *that* in which the forms of his pencil seem to have had their birth; for they are neither men nor women—at least like us that walk the earth—but rather of a race which minds of a high order might call up when they think of the inhabitants of the planet Saturn.

Elsewhere, perhaps, this may be jargon—but not *here*, I venture to hope." Rosalia bowed. "Nay, the eloquent confession I have just heard could not have been made, had not the spell of Michael Angelo been understood as well as felt."

"You have assisted me to understand him better," said Rosalia; "and if I do, perhaps I might say that he makes me think instead of feel. In other words, the effect is not mere sensation."

Monaldi answered her only by a look, but one of such unmingled pleasure, as would have called up a blush, had not a similar feeling prevented her observing it. He felt as if he had been listening to the echoes of his own mind.

"Upon my word, Rosalia," said her father, "I did not know you were so much of a connoisseur; 'tis quite new to me, I assure you."

Rosalia now blushed, for the compliment made her sensible of her enthusiasm, which now surprised herself; she could not recollect that she had ever before felt so much excited.

"Nay, my dear, I am serious, and I need not say how pleased. How you have escaped the cant of the day I can't guess. 'Tis now the fashion to talk of Michael Angelo's extravagance, of his want

of truth, and *what not;* as if truth were only in what we have *seen!* This matter-of-fact philosophy has infected the age: let the artists look to it. They have already begun to quarrel with the Apollo, because the skin wants suppleness! But what is that? a mere mechanical defect. Then they cavil at the form—those exquisite proportions. And where would be his celestial lightness, his preternatural majesty, without them? Signor Monaldi will forgive this strain; perhaps I should not hold it before an artist."

"I should be very sorry to have it believed," answered Monaldi, "that any artist could be found—I mean worthy the name—who would refuse to be instructed because the lesson does not come from a professor. I, for one, shall always be most happy to become a listener, especially where, from the pledge given, I shall have so just a hope of being enlightened. I am not used to complimenting; and Signor Landi will pardon me if I add, that I respect my art too much to affect a deference for any criticism—come whence it may—which I know to be unsound; it is founded in truth, and the professor degrades it who palters with its principles."

"Perhaps you overrate me," said the Advocate. "But, be that as it may, Signor Monaldi cannot do me a greater favour than in making me a frequent listener to himself."

Monaldi then took leave.

"So gentle—yet so commanding!" said Landi, his eyes still resting on the door through which his visitor had passed—"even lofty—yet so wholly free of pretence and affectation—not an atom of either, but perfectly natural, even when he talked of the people of Saturn. Did you observe how his face brightened then, as if he had been actually familiar with them? I can almost fancy that we have been talking with Raffaelle. He has not disappointed you, I am sure?"

"No," replied Rosalia, "on the contrary"—She felt provoked with herself that she could say nothing more.

"I do not know," added the Advocate, "that I ever met with a young man who won upon me so rapidly. But 'tis an intellectual creature—rarely to be met with."

CHAPTER VII.

With men of very vivid imaginations it would seem as if the greater charm were rather in the shadow than the substance. At least, it is true that they are often so well content with a pleasing image as long to overlook in its object the immediate attraction, whether of mind or heart, which first gave it interest; nor is it surprising that, when it is contemplated in the enchanted atmosphere of *reverie*, it should seem to possess a satisfying charm, to the exclusion, for the time, of all consciousness of any personal relation to the living original. It was in this peculiar atmosphere that Monaldi's spirit was now reposing. Though he could think of nothing with which the image of Rosalia was not in some way or other blended, and spent hours together in *re*beholding and *re*hearing every particular of their late interview, yet he never dreamed

of asking wherefore. If he dwelt on her beauty, her grace, her voice, they were never referred to any wishes of his own; to himself they were as nothing; indeed his power of reflection seemed for the time suspended; and he yielded to their influence, feeling only their presence, wrapped as it were, passive and listless, in some delicious spell.

But this aimless reverie had a nearer relation to himself than he was then aware of; and the most imaginative dreamer must awake at last. Though availing himself of Landi's invitation, he had already several times met Rosalia, yet seeing her only in her father's presence, their conversation had been too general to lead to anything which might betray to him the state of his heart. But he was now to see her on a nearer view, being invited to pass a musical evening at the Advocate's. On entering the drawing-room, he found the daughter alone. This was so unexpected that he hardly knew whether to be pleased or not. Before he entered the house, he would have thought of such a tête-à-tête with delight; for he had always conversed freely with Rosalia, and felt while talking with her, as if the charms of her discourse made even his own more than usually

eloquent, and he had often wished that the pleasure of listening and replying to her had been less interrupted by a third person. But now that he was without such interruption, he suddenly found that he had not a word at command. He felt as if something had bewildered him, but, instead of stopping to inquire what, he began to make such violent efforts to feel at ease that the palpitation of his heart became almost audible, and he was fairly wishing himself out of the house when Landi made his appearance. The relief which Monaldi felt at the father's entrance might now have explained the mystery, had not his attention been diverted by the Advocate's inquiries concerning the progress of his picture. But he was not doomed to remain long in ignorance.

Skill in music is so common in Italy that Rosalia hardly considered it an object of ambition; she had studied it merely for her own gratification and her father's amusement, and her execution, though good, was far from being what a connoisseur would call *brilliant;* but she had something better—an exquisite voice, and the power of enthralling even the coldest hearer. Her power consisted, not in the mere expression of concords, but in that science

of the heart which no written music can supply, in those delicate inflexions which seem to imbue sound with life, conveying thought and sentiment; and when to these was added the *accompaniment* of her face—the tremor of her lips, and the scarcely perceptible elevation and depression of the lids of her dark, steel-grey eyes, following the movement through all its subtile undulations—what unconscious lover could look and listen, *still* unconscious?

In order that his guest might become acquainted with her style, her father proposed her playing one or two pieces alone, and she began with a passage from Corelli.

Monaldi took his station behind her chair; but a mirror back of the piano brought them face to face. This circumstance was too common to discompose Rosalia, and she went through the piece in her usual manner, except that once, when she caught his eye, she had, somehow or other, skipped a few notes.

To Monaldi, however, whose embarrassment had been increasing with her performance, the situation became so uneasy that nothing but the fear of appearing rude prevented his sitting down. But

when she began to sing that tender air from Metastasio,—

No, non vedrete mai
Cambiar gli affetti miei—

and he beheld her devoted look, and heard her impassioned tones, it seemed as if something within him spoke—and all he felt, and *what* he felt, rushed to his brain. "I love her!" said he to himself—"I love her!"

Monaldi had scarcely made this discovery, when he was called upon for his accompaniment. He started, and taking up his violin, he began hurrying over the strings with such rapidity that Rosalia was obliged to request a slower movement. Then he became too slow, drawing out his notes as if performing a requiem. "A little quicker," said Landi. Monaldi changed his time. It became worse; neither quick, nor slow, but a mixture of both, like the long-and-short gallop of a battle piece.

"Signor Monaldi!" cried the Advocate. Monaldi's instrument fell from his hand.

The dead silence which followed this unlucky crash brought Monaldi to himself, and the whole train of his blunders came at once before him.

He felt his ears burn, and stood dumb with confusion. Landi, seeing his distress, kindly endeavoured to laugh it off: but his efforts were in vain; Monaldi could not even make an attempt to rally; the thought of having appeared ridiculous, and appeared so before Rosalia, had quite overcome him. He remained for a moment irresolute; then uttering a kind of half intelligible apology about sudden indisposition, he made a hurried bow and withdrew.

"So," said Landi, as the door closed upon his guest, "I find we are left to finish the evening tête-à-tête. Well, 'tis no great hardship; 'tis not the first time I shall be indebted to you for my evening's entertainment. Sit down, my dear, and play me something from Pergolesi."

Rosalia obeyed.

"What is it you are playing?"

"Your favourite."

"Well, go on."

Rosalia continued, but her father listened in vain; he could catch no sound like Pergolesi's. He heard her through, however, with kindness and patience, and then very considerately recollected that he had letters to write.

CHAPTER VIII.

THERE is a certain region of the heart which may well be called the sanctuary of every individual; where even the humble and oppressed may (thank heaven) claim a sovereignty; it is there too, where the hopes and fears, and all that give a colour to the outward, may be said to dwell, and, though in the pressure of crowds, where we can retire unobserved and feel ourselves distinct, intangible alike—if such be our pleasure—both to friend and foe.

Perhaps there is nothing more sedulously guarded than this secret recess in pure woman's heart: there indeed it *is* a sanctuary—insomuch that, to keep it inviolate, it would sometimes seem as if she had closed it to herself. Hence it is that some women may even love long before they are aware of it. For in that place of mystery is born,

if we mistake not, a pure woman's love; and hence too it may be, as if partaking of the nature of its birth-place, that it is so long shadowy to the every-day eye—even so shadowy, as to be unconsciously nursed, nay, to grow to maturity, and still continue a shadow, till some magic accident—a word, a look, the merest trifle—gives it a name and substance.

In some such wise was Monaldi's image allowed to linger, and linger, in the heart of Rosalia, until, from an undefined shadow, it gradually took shape, and was quickened into life. Long before they met she had seen, and admired his productions; and when she saw the man, his noble countenance and unassuming manners more than answered to what she had imagined him.

Where our expectations have been highly wrought, it is no small gain if we are not disappointed. It was so in this instance; and Monaldi had scarcely left her before she found that he had risen in her opinion even as an artist. As they became more acquainted, she found in his mind and heart all that she had ever imagined, or asked for. Yet still she knew not that the image he had left in her memory was anything to her but

an harmonious picture, which it was natural to dwell on, and to dwell on with pleasure; not that a transient feeling would not occasionally whisper of something *more;* but the hints were vague, and always sure to be repressed by a constant fear of—she knew not what: absence indeed might soon have quickened her apprehension; but she saw the original almost daily: and there is no saying how long her self-ignorance might have continued had it not been for a trifling incident.

The more Monaldi dwelt on the mortifying occurrence of the unfortunate evening, the stronger became his conviction that Rosalia could not but regard him with something like contempt; and so fully did this thought possess him, that near a fortnight elapsed before he had the courage to wish to see her. But the wish once allowed overcame his fears, and he hurried away to the Advocate's.

As he approached the scene of his last visit, the recollection of his folly became too overpowering, and he was on the point of turning back, when the sound of Rosalia's voice again changed his purpose. She was singing the well-remembered air from Metastasio—and he heard again the same thrilling tones which had first revealed to him the state of

his heart—they now drew him onward like a charmed thing. The touching simplicity with which the second stanza begins,

Quel cor, che vi donai,
Più chieder non potrei—

could not be heard with indifference even from a less gifted voice than Rosalia's; but, given by her, and with that look of love, which now more than ever spoke from her eyes—it must have been felt by the coldest heart. She had just ended the second line as Monaldi entered the drawing-room, and their eyes a second time met in the mirror. Had an apparition stood before her, the sight had hardly been more startling. She felt as if her conscious application of the words had been actually detected. Her voice died on her lips, and her face became colourless as marble.

"Good Heaven! Rosalia, you are ill!" said Monaldi, wholly forgetting himself in alarm.

It was the first time he had ever addressed her so familiarly, and the blood now mounted like a crimson cloud to her forehead. The quick-sighted lover no longer thought of illness—but the thought which followed made him almost doubt if he were awake.

"I will let my father know that you are here," said Rosalia, rising; but she was unable to move.

"But one moment," said Monaldi, taking her hand, though hardly conscious that he did so. "Rosalia." She gently withdrew her hand. "I beg pardon, Signora I should have said. But why affect a form, the bare utterance of which seems to chill me? The time is come when I must use it no more, or with a meaning still dearer. Yes—Rosalia, I will speak with that openness, which your own ingenuous, your *direct* nature knows not how to condemn—I love you."

For one minute Rosalia felt as if she would willingly have sunk into the earth. Her secret had been betrayed—this confession assured her of it—and had been betrayed by *herself.*

"'Tis all a dream then!" said Monaldi, turning away. "But what a dream to awake from! Yet how I torture her—she cannot say yes, and her gentle nature shrinks from saying no. Rosalia, again pardon me. I have but one word more, and will no longer distress you; think no more of this rash avowal—there is nothing due to it—'twas involuntary, and one, believe me, which I could not have made in a moment of reflection—for without

hope—no. I should never then have had the presumption to hope—forgive it then—and, if you can, forget that I have dared to make so ill a return for the notice with which you have but too much honoured me."

Rosalia attempted to speak, but her lips moved without sound.

"I ask no answer," continued Monaldi mournfully; "I deserve none—but rather—and let that be my atonement—that I leave you, and for ever."

"No, no," said Rosalia in a voice hardly audible. A moment of breathless silence followed, while she caught at the back of a chair, as if it could impart the strength which she needed to proceed; but the sound of her own voice restored her to herself.

"Monaldi—your frankness—"

"Can you forgive it?"

"I will do more, Monaldi, I will return it."

She held out her hand to him; but her strength failed her, and he caught her on his bosom.

CHAPTER IX.

WITHIN a short lover's age, Monaldi became a husband; and his happiness would now have been complete could he have felt assured that peace was again restored to his friend. But Maldura had long since disappeared, having left his lodgings the day after Monaldi's offer; nor could the least trace of him be discovered. Monaldi felt the disappointment the more, as he had now persuaded himself that no melancholy, however wayward, could long withstand the sympathy of his wife.

Maldura's absence was occasioned by a letter from Sienna, announcing the death of a rich relation, and calling him there to take possession of his inheritance. A few years back this accession of wealth would have filled him with joy. But what is wealth to the crumbled hopes of intellectual ambition? It cannot rebuild them. Mal-

dura received the intelligence without the moving a muscle. Though it gave no pain, it could give no pleasure; for he was no sensualist; he had never had but one vice—the lust of praise—which, seated in his brain, seemed, like a voracious reptile, to swallow up every thought as soon as born, till, bloated with overgorging, it had left no room for the growth of another. To a vice like this money was useless, except with a coxcomb. But Maldura was no coxcomb; and he disdained to beg or bribe —even for praise. Yet he, notwithstanding, took possession of his fortune; there was no one on earth whom he loved; and there was some satisfaction, he thought, in possessing that which many wanted; he was content to be rich, because others were poor.

Having arranged his affairs, he now began to consider whither to direct his course. He had quitted Rome, as he believed, for ever, and Florence was associated with too many bitter recollections to be thought of again; but where to go he knew not, for having no longer any object, there was nothing to draw him to one place more than another. In this state of indecision having one evening strolled into a coffee-house, a stranger near

him mentioned the name of Monaldi. He thought he had schooled himself to hear it with indifference; yet he leaned over his table towards the speaker. The stranger was giving an account to a person next him of Monaldi's marriage. Maldura listened with little change of feeling till he heard the name of Rosalia Landi. He could hear no more, but starting up, rushed out of the house.

"I go to Rome," said Maldura to his servant, as soon as he reached home. "To-night, sir!" exclaimed the man, staring. "Yes, to-night—business calls me." "Why, 'tis almost dark, sir." "I want not your attendance," said Maldura, impatiently; "I go alone. Now see to my portmanteau, and order a horse to the door." The servant obeyed, and Maldura was soon on his way.

It was enough, he thought, to have been rejected; but to be rejected for one whom of all others he most envied, and therefore most hated; to know that the woman he had once loved, and the man he had once almost despised, were now as one; that they were prosperous and happy; that without title, rank, almost without family, they were yet objects of the public gaze, of public admiration; and that go where he would, talk with whom

he would, he must hear for ever of the painter Monaldi and his beautiful wife; to know all this—whilst himself was unknown, miserable—drove him to madness. He uttered no curse; he did not weaken by words the deadly purpose which lay at his heart. What that was he had not yet defined, in any of its particulars, even to himself; yet he only waited to mature it till he should find a proper instrument to give it action; till then he was contented with brooding over its general form, and steadily looking forward to its birth.

In this mood Maldura pursued his journey. He had now reached Radicofani, and was slowly moving up the mountain, the reins given to his horse, his eyes closed, and his thoughts busy about the future, when a voice before him suddenly commanded him to stop. He raised his eyes, but, it being after nightfall, he could only discern the figure of a horseman standing in his path, and presenting what he supposed to be a pistol.

Maldura was wholly unprepared for defence, for he had quitted Sienna in too much haste, and was too intent on the object of his journey, to think of providing himself with arms; besides, it is doubtful whether, in his present state of mind, he would

have taken the precaution, had it even occurred to him.

"Your purse, or your life," cried the stranger.

"Take which you will," replied Maldura, calmly; "they are both to me worthless."

"Your purse, then," said the robber.

Maldura deliberately handed him his purse. "Does that content you?"

"If it be gold," returned the other, weighing it in his hand.

"'Tis all gold, I assure you."

"Don't lie, friend," said the robber,—"the weight of your purse has saved you, whatever its contents."

"Maldura never uttered a lie to man breathing! nor could the fear of such a man as Fialto extort one from him." The robber started. "I know you, Count," added Maldura; "that voice, which has ruined so many women, was never heard to be forgotten."

"You know me, then?" said the Count, after a slight pause. "Well, sir, you shall also know that the Count Fialto never leaves any witnesses against him above ground."

"Put down your weapon," said Maldura, coolly,

"My life is nothing to me, as I have told you, nor would it be were it prolonged to a century; but to *you* it may be worth something. In short, I need your services, Count; and, more—I have wherewith to pay for them."

"Is the devil in you, Maldura, in good sooth; or are you only playing the part of one, like our worthy friars at an *auto da fè?*"

"If you had said a hell, I should answer Yes,—but I lack a devil."

"And therefore apply to me?"

"Ay; you are the very one I have been wishing for."

"Thank you!—Well, I must needs be a very patient devil to bear this."

"Your patience has served you, Count, in worse cases. Have not I seen your presence empty a coffee-house in ten minutes? Yet you avenged it only by a curl of your lip—and wisely; for none but a madman would have thought of disputing tastes with a score of stilettoes. No, you are not the fool, Count, to hazard either life or interest for a reputation past mending. I address you in your vocation—and there 's surely no wrong done in adding the title."

"You have certainly the prettiest way," answered Fialto, "of persuading a man to sign himself rascal. But words are words! so it matters little by what name I live. Now, my good fellow-caitiff, what is your infernal errand?"

"In a word then," said Maldura, "I have been injured."

"Proceed."

"And would be revenged."

"Well, what prevents you? Are all the druggists dead in Italy?"

"Pshaw! I want assistance."

"Nay, I never stab or poison, except on my own account."

"I would have you do neither."

"What then?"

"'Tis a matter that requires considering; and I would talk it over with you more at leisure, and in a place less exposed. I do not like this parleying in the dark; there may be ears about."

"True, you talk like an adept; the grave is the only place free of them. But dare you trust yourself with me?"

"With an hundred such."

"'Tis more than I would," observed Fialto, drily. "Well then, follow me."

Though the infamy of Fialto's character had long excluded him from all sober society, his natural and acquired endowments were yet too dazzling not to obtain him a ready reception with the gay and young; and there were some even among the graver class, more nice perhaps in their taste than their morals, who, attracted by the brilliancy and extraordinary variety of his conversation, scrupled not to court his acquaintance in private when their prudence would have made them ashamed to acknowledge it in public. Among this latter number had been Maldura. But the fascination of Fialto was not confined to listeners of his own sex; if his wit and eloquence made them content to be swindled of their money, the uncommon beauty of his person, and his insinuating manners, gave him no less advantage over the hearts of the women. No woman, it was said, could withstand the witchery of his eye; and many a husband and father have often stolen home from the assembly where chance threw him in their way, but too happy if their wives and daughters had escaped it. But

among his many seductions, the most notorious, and the one for which he was most dreaded, was that of a Nun. Of this, however, he was only suspected, for no proof of it appearing, even the Holy Office was obliged to acquit him.

Maldura had often heard of Fialto's gallantries, and of this among the number; whether they were true or not he cared little; it was enough that they were imputed to him, that he was considered a dangerous man; and when he added to this character the certainty that the Count had long since run through his fortune, that he had been a gambler, a swindler, and was now become a robber, he thought it impossible to find an accomplice better suited to his purpose.

Such were his thoughts when, entering a thick wood, his companion desired him to dismount. "We must leave our horses here," said Fialto; "my habitation is not far off." They then struck out of the wood, and began to ascend a wild and barren country.

It was one of those still nights from which a quiet heart seems to imbibe a peace more profound. Not a breath of air was stirring, nor a cloud to be seen; all nature seemed buried in slumber—all

but the wakeful eyes of heaven—while the fitful, uncertain light they shed upon the grey rocks, that here and there jutted up from the black hollows of the mountain, appeared to give them an undulating motion, as if sleep had softened them into life, and they were heaving with breath. But the repose of the scene touched not the turbulent hearts of the travellers, seeming rather to wall them about, and shutting them up from the external world, to give freer play and bolder daring to the evil spirits within. As Maldura looked out upon the darkness, he felt as if it had compressed his soul to a point; as if his whole being, once spread abroad, modifying, and modified by, the surrounding elements, were now suddenly gathered back, like the rays of an extinguished lamp, and absorbed in one black feeling of revenge. His libertine companion, not less selfish, but more in humour with the world, availed himself of his abstraction in maturing the unfinished schemes which he hoped to turn to his future profit and pleasure. They thus walked on in silence, till winding up a narrow, broken path, they stopped at the foot of a steep rock, forming the base of a cliff.

"Our journey is ended," said the Count; "this

is my castle when my good friends in the world become importunate." Then, taking a flageolet from his pocket, he ran over a few wild notes, when hearing the tinkling of a sheep-bell, apparently from a great distance, he stopped. "I am answered. All is safe." So saying, he led the way to a cleft overhung with bushes, about midway up the rock, the projections on its surface serving for steps.

"What folly is this?" said Maldura.

"Part those bushes," replied his companion.

He did so; and a door appearing, they entered a cavern.

"'Tis he at last!" cried a female voice. Maldura leaned forward to look at the speaker, but he instantly drew back. She stood near the entrance holding a lamp, and as the light fell upon her large dark eyes, it gave them a brightness so fearfully contrasting with her other livid, shrunk features, that he thought he had never beheld so strange a mixture of life and death.

"Marcellina," said the Count.

"It is he!" she cried, recovering her breath. "Thank God!" Then instantly closing her eyes, she added half to herself: "But no—to him—

I am nothing to him now;" and a visible tremour ran over her limbs.

"Tut!" said Fialto. "Well, Marcellina, and how are you?"

"Alas! 'tis a long time," said she—

"Since I have been here? I know it."

"I thought you would never come."

"Don't be foolish; I have brought you a visitor. Have you anything to entertain him with?"

"Such as I have he is welcome to."

"Well, whatever it is, Maldura, I dare swear, needs no cardinal compound of pinochii and truffles to sauce it down. He's a poet; and those of his tribe seldom feast, except on posthumous dinners with posterity. But I beg his laced cloak's pardon; I see he has *cut* the chameleons—of course now an ex-poet, for a fat purse makes but lean verses."

Had Maldura wavered in his purpose, this accidental allusion to his blasted hopes would soon have fixed it. He affected to smile, but his face darkened with vengeance.

"What, ashamed of your trade, man?" said the Count, observing the change in his countenance. "Well, 'tis the way of the world; we never quarrel with what we are, but what we *have been;* and I

can't say but even I might be ashamed of dicing, could I once leave it off. As it is, however, I'm content to think it a very pretty, gentlemanlike vice. But I see you are impatient—so, we'll e'en to business."

"Nay, but you will first tell me—" said Marcellina, making a timid attempt to detain her companion.

"Come, come," said Fialto; "we will talk about our own affairs another time. My friend, I dare say, is hungry; this keen air of the mountains whets one's appetite confoundedly."

Marcellina sighed, and silently began to prepare for supper.

The travellers in the mean time retired to an inner apartment in order to confer on the subject of their alliance. Maldura then stated his purpose and the Count his conditions; at length, after some discussion, the affair was arranged to their mutual satisfaction.

"Such is my plan," concluded Maldura; "but should you do more, and succeed so far as to cause their separation, the sum shall be doubled."

"Nay, if you wish it," replied Fialto, "I will even take her to myself."

"No," said Maldura, "force would only defeat my object."

"You mistake me: I mean with her own consent."

"Impossible!"

"That's a word I never knew the meaning of. Give me but a month—"

"Never. Proud as you are, Count, and with as much reason as you have to be so, there is yet one woman in the world to whom all your arts, were they ten times more seductive, would be as nothing: that woman is Rosalia."

"'Faith, you have touched my pride; for, do you know, I'm a purity-fancier."

"Hold!—you must not attempt her; for, as you would certainly fail, she would as certainly betray you to her husband. What then becomes of his jealousy?"

"So, I am only to sin by implication?"

"She must not even hear your name, at least as connected with hers; for she knows you—as who does not?"

"Ay, I dare say she has heard that I carry a rosary of broken hearts, strung like beads, about my neck; and that I count them every night be-

fore a taper of brimstone, to keep good angels from obstructing my hopeful course to—where, certainly, I've no great inclination to push my fortune."

"You certainly have the credit of a free chart."

"The world does me too much honour! No, I don't more than half deserve it."

"Well, the half is enough to prevent any decent woman putting herself in your way."

"Oh, if the painter's wife is *afraid* of me, she's mine to a certainty."

"I don't question your logic, Count," said Maldura, with a half-suppressed sneer; "yet you are not, perhaps, aware that a virtuous woman might avoid a libertine from other motives besides fear. There may be such a thing as *antipathy*."

"Umph!" answered Fialto, drumming on the hilt of his dagger. "By the way, that's a very pretty jewel on your finger."

"'Tis yours," said Maldura, taking off the ring and presenting it.

"By no means," said the Count, though some what hesitating; "we are not on the *road* now. Besides, you are my guest—I could not in honour accept it."

"Then wear it as a pledge of my good faith."

"Well, as a pledge. But what if this Monaldi should refuse to be jealous? For I have known husbands who never dream of a gallant till they stumble over him."

"I know him too well to doubt your success. Wherever he fixes his affections there will be his whole soul; and though not suspicious, yet will her constant presence in his mind make him acutely sensitive to the least breath that touches her."

"Say no more: I see he is most happily disposed to be miserable."

"Well, do we now understand each other?"

"Yes. But you have given such a description of this paragon, that I dare not answer if—"

"Fialto," said Maldura sternly, "if you keep not within the charter—"

"What then?" retorted the Count, fiercely.

"I—hold the purse."

"I bow before thee, most mighty wizard! That little word would bind even Love, though he had as many wings, and were as strong, as a whirlwind. Only repeat it when I become restiff, and you'll find me as docile as the pet-cat of an old maid."

"Then we are agreed?"

"Agreed! Why, man, thou art a licensed sor-

cerer! There is nothing on earth, bearing about with it a full wit and an empty stomach, can withstand thee. Thou hast the true *charm*, to soften, or harden hearts at pleasure; and if I obey thee not, 'twill only be because some mightier magician shall have conjured me out of my appetite."

They now returned to Marcellina, and sat down to supper.

"But how is this, Marcellina?" said Fialto; "this is the very flask of Montepulciano that I brought you a month ago."

"I reserved it for you," answered Marcellina.

"That was foolish. You'll at least partake of it now." She shook her head. "Will you not join us?"

"No," she replied; "'tis enough—" she would have added, "to see you—" when a frown from Fialto checked her. But he could not check the language of her eyes. She had taken her seat at a little distance opposite, and, watching every turn of his countenance, seemed to hang upon it with a fondness so intense and devoted—as if in her whole mind there was but one thought—that of the object before her. Yet there was a gloom in her

love which occasionally gave her an expression almost awful.

Maldura had marked these looks, and the story of the Nun crossed his mind. He looked again, and the more he examined her, the stronger became his suspicion that she was the person; for though her form was wasted, her features shrunk and wrinkled, and her hair prematurely grey, the traces of their former beauty were still too visible to leave a doubt that she had once been lovely.

Had any one but Maldura beheld this piteous object, and then looked on her betrayer, and surveyed his elegant, yet muscular limbs, his fresh black hair, his smooth forehead, the cold sparkle of his eye, the healthful colour of his cheeks, the smile that curled his lips, and the gaiety that danced like a youthful spirit over the whole; and then thought of his heart—the black life-spring of all this seducing beauty—he would have shrunk from him with horror, and turned for relief even to his wretched companion. But Maldura felt not the contrast, or if he did it was only to confirm him in the choice of his instrument.

Though Fialto scarcely looked towards Marcellina, he could not help feeling that her gaze was

upon him, and willing to divert his mind from certain uneasy thoughts which that awakened, he suddenly broke the silence into which their meal had relapsed by inquiring, "if Maldura had heard anything lately of a certain Cagliostro?"

"Yes," answered Maldura; "I am told he is now figuring away in England."

"He is certainly the cleverest scoundrel I ever met with. But he is one of those unfortunate geniuses who come into the world at the wrong time; he should have been born two centuries sooner, when he might have had half Christendom under his foot."

"You knew him then?"

"I met him once in Madrid. What devil carried him there with his tricks I never could guess; but it must have been Beelzebub himself that carried him out of it: for no other could have given him safe-conduct through the Inquisition."

"Can nothing but the devil," asked Maldura, fixing his eye on the Count—"can only the devil extricate a man thence?" Fialto affected to cough. "*You* can tell," continued Maldura, "for now I recollect, there was once a foolish story about a nun—"

Marcellina uttered a shriek, and fell senseless. For a moment Fialto stood like one stunned: then, smothering a curse, he sprang to her assistance. Maldura offered his services, but the Count waving his hand, he prudently drew back.

"Am I awake?" said Marcellina, at length recovering. "I have had a frightful dream. Ah! never could I live through such another. I thought, dear Fialto, I thought—"

"You must not speak, Marcellina," said the Count; "you are too weak—it hurts you."

"But I must tell you this to relieve my mind."

"Nay, you must not."

"'Tis only a few words—I thought that a familiar of the Inquisition—"

Fialto ground his teeth with rage, yet fearing to trust himself with speech, he made a sign for Marcellina to be silent; but she was too intent on her own thoughts to observe him.

"Where was I?" she continued; "oh, well—and the familiar I thought came into my cell—"

"Peace!" cried the Count in a voice of thunder. "Marcellina, you *know* me—I will never forgive you if you refuse to obey me."

"Then I should be cursed on earth too—you are obeyed."

"You must go to bed," said Fialto.

She assented by an inclination of her head; and he was supporting her to her chamber, when she caught a glimpse of Maldura.

"There! there he is again!" she screamed.

Fialto hurried her into the chamber, and closed the door after him.

"It is so!" said Maldura to himself. "He is now in my power, and *shall* be faithful."

It was near an hour before Fialto returned.

"How is she?" asked Maldura.

Without answering the question, Fialto continued for some time to pace the cavern with his arms folded; at length stopping and slowly raising his eyes, "Maldura," said he—

"Proceed, sir," quietly returned Maldura; for he guessed the subject of Fialto's thoughts, and was prepared.

"What think you—of what has just passed?"

"Thoughts, Count, you know are free; they come unbidden, and stay without leave; the mind therefore—so it use them not—cannot be answerable for their birth or nature."

"You are metaphysical, sir."

"'Tis my humour. This being true, he is but

a fool, should their nature be dangerous, who willingly betrays them to another."

"I understand you, sir. But you should have added," observed Fialto, half drawing his stiletto, "one trifling qualification—unless he find it his *interest* to betray them."

"Your dagger, Count," said Maldura, "would waste its edge on me; for I should not care if you had seduced a whole convent."

"Fool, to have brought him here!" muttered Fialto to himself.

"Count Fialto," said Maldura, "I am now in your power. If you fear me, this is a most convenient place to bury your fears in." Fialto's hand went to his dagger. "If there be no other way to secure your peace, strike! You will do more—you will rid me of a hateful existence."

"Maldura, I will be plain with you," said Fialto. "You say right—you *are* in my power; and I would bury my secret with your corpse on the spot where you stand, but that I know that men, good or bad, never act without motive: and you can have none to betray me—at least for the present. Should you have hereafter, why, then, I shall need no prompter; and my hand has never missed whom

my eye has marked. Then, take your life; not as a gift for which I expect gratitude—I know you too well to delude myself with any such improbability—'tis not in the heart which I have read to-night—that frown is idle, sir—but I give it, because I hold it of no moment to me."

"The expression you were pleased to notice," replied Maldura with the same composure, "had a deeper root than you can yet reach. You are free to criticise my morals as you like, provided only I be not bound in return to mend them by those of my judge. But a truce to this. I will meet you, Count, on your own ground, and with equal plainness. Your secret with me is as with the dead. My soul has no purpose save the one you know—no pleasure, no profit in anything which man could name to me; what then should I gain by your death? or the death of all the libertines in the world?—Nothing. I should still be the same—the same human weed, fastened to the same spot, and still hating its own rankness."

"I *do* trust you," said the Count, extending his hand. "So, good night. You will find a pallet in that recess."

CHAPTER X.

NOTHING more occurring, the confederates proceeded the next morning on their way to Rome, taking care, however, always to separate when they came to a town. According to this plan, when they reached Viterbo, Maldura entered and quitted it alone, and had proceeded some miles before Fialto overtook him.

"We are in luck," said the latter, as he rejoined his companion, "I have seen Monaldi; he was pointed out to me as he was getting into a carriage just as I entered the inn-yard. It seems he is on his way to Florence, to see to the putting up of some picture he has painted for a church there. So said the innkeeper."

"But his wife," interrupted Maldura—

"There was no lady with him. And he will be absent a fortnight at least. Rare! eh?"

"Yes," said Maldura, "if she remain at home. A fortnight, did you say? That 's time enough"—

"Ay, for any woman to transfer her affections—at least in the calculation of a jealous husband."

"Well, sir, let us on."

On their arrival in Rome, Maldura took lodgings in a part of the city remote from his former abode, and where from its obscurity he thought he was least likely to fall in with Monaldi, whom he was determined to avoid unless some circumstance should occur to render their meeting necessary. Fialto established himself nearer the scene of action, and began his operations by making it appear as if he haunted the painter's dwelling; passing and repassing it a dozen times a day, sometimes stopping before it under one pretence or another, then giving a side glance towards the windows, and suddenly turning another way if any one chanced to observe him, and sometimes curvetting to and fro for several minutes on a restiff horse, and occasionally affecting to take something from his pocket and throw it into the court. All this was done to excite the attention of the neighbours; nor was it long before it succeeded. The

first effect, however, was that of mere surprise to see him so often in the same street; generally ending with simple exclamations, as, "Oh, here 's *the same gentleman*," or "here he comes again!" Then they began to wonder what brought him there. But when they remembered his frequent glances at Monaldi's house, the mystery was explained; the transition was but too natural from the handsome cavalier to the painter's wife.

Such was the state of things when Monaldi returned. His arrival was accordingly noted by his neighbours with as many shrugs and winks as are usual in similar cases. But there was one amongst them to whom it seemed to afford particular pleasure; for now, as he thought, was a fair opportunity to give play to his resentment in many a good "*fling*" at the great man. This person, whom Monaldi had unconsciously offended, was a worker in mosaic, and kept a shop directly opposite him. The cause of the offence was the negative one of sometimes being silent when Romero expected to be praised: not that Monaldi had ever denied him praise when he thought it due, for he was too conscientious to withhold it even from an enemy, but only that he had fallen short of the exorbitant

measure which the other demanded; an injury often more important than one that is positive, for while the latter is bounded by its word or deed, the former is limited only by the vanity of the injured.

"Good morning, signor Monaldi," said Romero. "So, you have been a long journey. Ay, 'tis *well* you are come back."

This speech would hardly have been noticed but for its peculiar emphasis.

"Well, sir!" repeated Monaldi, "why *well?*"

"Oh, nothing—only—a man, you know, is always better at home—especially"—

"Sir?"

"Umph!—Don't it look like rain? Carluccio, why don't you attend to the shop?"

"You were observing—" said Monaldi.

"Oh, nothing of consequence—at least to me," replied Romero, closing his shop door. "Good day, sir; I must see to my customers."

"'T is of a piece," thought Monaldi, "with his usual forwardness; he wants to talk and has nothing to say." And the speech and Romero passed from his mind.

Nothing more occurred for several days, till one

morning, as Monaldi was going out, he saw a man standing at the entrance of his gateway. As he approached, the stranger suddenly drew his hat over his eyes, and precipitately retreated; not however, before the former had distinctly seen his face. Monaldi quickened his pace in order to overtake him, but on entering the street, the man was lost in the crowd; and before he had time to form any conjecture on the incident, his attention was diverted by a message from the pope, requiring his attendance.

But going the next day to a window which overlooked Romero's shop, he observed the same person standing at the door, and apparently conversing by signs with some one in his own house. The recognition, even connected with such a circumstance, might have passed off without a thought, had not the stranger on catching his eye again drawn his hat over his face and hastily entered the shop. This last action gave an importance to the other which he could not overlook. And for the first time in his life, Monaldi became conscious of suspicion; but of whom, or of what, he could not tell. He felt that the stranger was somehow or other connected with him or his household, and

the sensation excited by the thought became still more painful from its being undefined.

Who the man was perplexed him. "Yet might it not be some one he had formerly known? No; he could not recollect meeting him before the day preceding. Who was he then?—Perhaps Romero could inform him. But Romero was prying and familiar; and should he ask the motive for the inquiry — what answer could be given? No, he would not question him. Yet the more he thought of it, the more he felt inclined to apply to him; but something—he knew not what—always checked him.

In this mood he continued to pace the room for a considerable time, when, going again to the window, he saw the stranger come out of the shop, and again make a sign, as he thought, toward his house. "I *will* know who he is." But before he had reached the street, the stranger was gone.

For near a fortnight after Monaldi observed the same person almost daily hanging about the neighbourhood, and always betraying the same solicitude to avoid him. Still no opportunity offered of learning who he was. Wearied at length with fruitless conjectures, and willing to divert his mind

with other thoughts, he was one evening prevailed on to accompany his father-in-law, to see a new opera. Rosalia had also been invited, but she declined on account of a headach.

They had been but a little while in the theatre, when Landi directed Monaldi's attention to a box opposite.

"Do you observe that gay cavalier?"

"Which?" asked Monaldi.

"He that has just entered, with the embroiderd waistcoat."

Monaldi looked, and beheld the *stranger*. "Who is he?" he asked quickly.

"'Tis the notorious Count Fialto."

"Fialto!" repeated Monaldi.

"What makes you start so?" said Landi.

"N-nothing."

"But you are ill?"

"No—not at all," answered Monaldi, endeavouring to assume a cheerful look—"quite well, I assure you."

"I fear you labour too much," said Landi.

"Perhaps so. But go on—you were speaking of this Count."

"I pointed him out to you," continued Landi,

"because I think him an anomaly in physiognomy. To look at his noble countenance, no one, ignorant of his character, would for a moment suspect that such a face could possibly belong to anything vicious; and yet, were all the wickedness in this house extracted from the hearts of each individual, I verily believe it would fall short in the gross of that in his."

"You seem to know him?"

"Not personally. But his character is no secret. There is no crime of which he is not capable."

"I have heard as much."

"But his deadliest sins are against those of the other sex. The catalogue of his seductions would appal any common libertine."

"He seems indeed no common one."

"Nay, his person, of itself, is a mere subordinate—but a fine statue, on which many women might gaze with impunity; 'tis only when animated by his master-mind—when his devil's heart rises to his angel's tongue, that it becomes an object of worship—fatal to the rash woman who shall then dare to look and listen."

Monaldi knew not why, but he felt, while his father-in-law was speaking, as if all his blood were

beating at his heart. But the opera was now begun, and the exquisite tones of Crescéntini soon made him forget that there was such a being as Fialto in the world.

The first act passed off without anything worth noting, except that Monaldi's attention was again drawn towards the opposite box by the entrance of a person with a letter for Fialto, who, glancing over it hastily, immediately withdrew; but this excited no sensation in Monaldi except that of pleasure in the other's absence, which left him at ease to enjoy the remainder of the opera.

There are few cares which do not yield for a time to the influence of fine music. Monaldi had felt it, and he was returning homeward full of happy thoughts, when arriving within a few paces of his house, he perceived a person lurking about his gateway. The impulse of the moment determined him to stop; and being just then under a lamp which hung before the image of a saint, he turned his back towards it, and muffled his face in his cloak. He had scarcely done so when the person passed him. Monaldi was thunder-struck; there could be no mistake—the light had fallen full on the other's face—it was Fialto.

There is a little cloud often described by travellers, and well known on the Indian seas, which at first appears like a dark speck in the horizon; as it rises, its hue deepens and its size increases; yet the approach of it is gradual, and the air meanwhile is soft and motionless; but while the inexperienced mariner is perhaps regarding it as a mere matter of curiosity, his sails unbent, and loosely hanging to the masts—in the twinkling of an eye, it seems to leap upon the ship—and, in a moment more, sails, masts, and all, are swept by the board. With like desolation did this little incident smite the heart of Monaldi: he felt as if some sudden calamity had laid his peace in ruins; yet he could give it no distinct shape, nor even comprehend the evil that would follow. He knew not with what, or with whom to connect Fialto's visit; but that Fialto had been in his house seemed almost beyond doubt; he had not indeed seen him come out of it—yet why was he hanging about it at this hour? "But how did this appear to concern himself?" He had scarcely asked the question, when twenty circumstances occurred in answer; but chiefly by the Count's uniform solicitude to avoid him; his confusion when detected gazing at the house, his

disappearance from the theatre soon after Monaldi's entrance; his absence during the rest of the evening, though it was a new play; and his sudden reappearance in this place, and at such a time; these were too evident in their bearing to allow of any misapprehension, and Monaldi was forced to admit that Fialto's purpose, whatever it was, had, in some way or other, relation to himself. There was an obscurity in this conclusion which thickened on his brain like an Egyptian darkness; not a thought could pierce it; even the avenues to conjecture were closed; he could only feel that he was surrounded by a thing impenetrable, and he had no resource but to wait till some further circumstance should give form and direction to his undefined misgivings. Nor was he long without one. The closing of a window above roused him from his reverie. He looked up and saw a light in his wife's chamber, and a female figure passing from the window. Rosalia and Fialto now met in his thoughts.

There is no act of the mind more abhorrent to a delicate man than that of admitting a criminating thought against an object once held sacred; and should a hundred circumstances arise to disturb,

and excite him to suspicion, it will at first be general, and fall anywhere, rather than on her he loves; for though it is the connection of these circumstances with *her*—which the mind *feels*, without acknowledging—that makes his misery; it is only when their direction is too plain to be mistaken that he suffers himself to perceive its object. So was it with Monaldi: the devotedness of his love had invested his wife with a charm which had hitherto kept her name and her image far from the troubled circle of his thoughts. But Fialto's manner—the finding him so near his house—the hour—the light in his own bed-chamber—the female at the window—were all too distinctly joined in his mind, not to mark the object of suspicion. The agony which followed was unutterable;—but it could not continue long; for Monaldi was naturally confiding; then he revolted at injustice; and to whom, if so, should he be unjust? The question drove him from self, to one infinitely dearer; and his generous nature now pleaded for her with all its energy. "Did he not *know* her?—as well—yes, as well as himself. Her whole heart had been open to him; he had seen it daily, from the day of their union—and he had found it pure;

he was no dotard—intensely as he loved—and he must have seen the stain had there been one—no artifice, no hypocrisy could have hidden it so long. And on what did he ground his suspicion? On a coincidence which a hundred accidents might innocently occasion." He almost hated himself as the word occurred to him. He then remembered that he had left his wife unwell; and it was very natural that she should retire to rest early; indeed it would have been more strange if she had waited his return. This last thought reassured him, and he entered the house. His confidence, however, was hardly restored when a contradictory circumstance again staggered it; he found his wife sitting in the very room where he had left her. "What, here! Has she then heard me enter?—and comes she down now to make me believe that she has passed the whole evening here?"

"You are home early," observed Rosalia; "I hope you have been entertained."

"Perhaps too early," replied Monaldi, hesitating, and almost shuddering at the strangeness of his own voice; "you seem surprised. What if *I* should be so at finding you *here?*"

"Me? Why so? Oh, I suppose you thought

my head-ach would have sent me to bed. But it is quite gone off."

"Indeed! and pray—*who* has cured it?"

The question seemed forced from him by torture, and his utterance was so thick that Rosàlia asked what he said.

"Your head-ach. I asked *who* has cured it."

"Oh, my old doctor—nature."

"Rosalia!" said Monaldi.

"What? but what disturbs you?"

"Nay, what *should?*"

"I am sure I know not."

"If *you* know not—but I'm afraid you have passed but a dull evening *alone.*"

"Oh, no, I have been amusing myself—if it may be called amusement to have one's flesh creep —with Dante. I had just finished the *Inferno* as you came in."

"As I came in? The Inferno, I must own, seems hardly a book of entertainment for a lady's bed-chamber."

"I don't understand you."

"Or will not."

"Dear husband!" said Rosalia, looking up with

surprise, and a feeling as yet new to her, "you talk in riddles."

"Is it a riddle to ask why you should choose to read in your chamber? For *there you were* when I entered."

"Who, I? No—I have not been up-stairs this evening."

"A lie!" groaned Monaldi, turning from her with an agony that would not be suppressed. "Oh, misery! 'tis then too—too—"

A maid-servant at that instant came in to tell her mistress that, as the night was damp, she had shut her chamber windows, though without orders.

"You have done well," said Rosalia.

"Thank God!" said Monaldi, as he heard this explanation. "Away — away for ever, infernal thoughts!"

Monaldi's emotion had not escaped his wife, but the entrance of the servant prevented her hearing his words. His altered expression now struck her. "Surely I have been dreaming," said Rosalia.

"Of nothing bad, I hope, my love," said Monaldi, now like another being, and gently drawing

her towards him; "for your dreams — if that dreams are pictures of the mind—should be like those of angels."

"I know not of what," answered Rosalia, "but it was something very painful. I thought you seemed unhappy. Was it so?"

"Never was I less so than now. Less so! that's a poor negative. No, my Rosalia, I feel a present, a positive, tangible happiness, which gives the lie to all who hold that we enjoy it only in the past and future. My heart is full; so full, that I ask nothing of time—of anything but thee—and to hear thee, to look upon thee."

"Oh, Monaldi, I am blest above women!"

"And dost thou think so?"

"At least I know not how I could be happier. For what more could I ask, with such a husband?"

"Or I, with such a wife? Amen! with my whole soul."

"I have sometimes thought," said Rosalia, "and I hope without pride, that the very bad could not know such bliss; nay, a love, like mine. For, could I love thee so, pure and exalted as thou art, did I love evil? I could not: I should then love

myself, and thee only as ministering to my selfishness. No! the love I bear thee is but the effluence of thy virtues given back to thyself; and it seems to elevate me; to refine my heart for the love of Him who is purest, best—who is Goodness."

CHAPTER XI.

A FEW days after this, Monaldi received a message from the worker in mosaic, requesting to speak with him.

"You will excuse my freedom," said Romero, as Monaldi entered the shop, "but I wished to have your opinion of a work I have lately begun. You may give me a hint, perhaps, that will be of service. 'Tis a miniature copy of that Magdalen by Guido."

Monaldi examined the copy, and comparing it with the original, commended the general fidelity, but pointed out several parts which he thought might be improved.

Romero thanked him with an air of pique, and observed, "I should not have troubled you for your opinion, had not the work been for a friend of yours—the Count Fialto."

"*My* friend!" said Monaldi, with some surprise; "the most——You are mistaken, sir; I have no acquaintance with him."

"I beg pardon," replied Romero; "but I concluded that he was so from seeing him come out of your house."

"My house!" repeated Monaldi.

"Or perhaps 'twas another person; for since *you* don't know him, no doubt I was mistaken. Indeed now, I rather wonder how I came to suppose him your friend, for the Count's character is none of the best. But that's nothing to *me*, or he should not be so free of my shop; for he comes here three or four times a week to see how my work gets on: in faith, so often, that, to say the truth, had I a pretty daughter, or——a *wife*, I shouldn't much relish it."

Monaldi looked up at the word *wife*, and saw a meaning in Romero's eye not to be mistaken. But the look was unnecessary; his shaft had already reached the mark.

"Well, I am much obliged to you, Signor Monaldi," concluded Romero, returning to his work, "and shall be careful in future how I call the Count *your* friend."

When Monaldi left the shop, the houses seemed to reel and the ground to bend beneath him. A sickening faintness had come over him, and he felt as if it were impossible to cross the street; but, making an effort, he reached his gateway, and leaned against it for support. His strength, however, soon returned; sooner than his memory, for it was some time before he could fix on the cause of his agitation, only recollecting that some dreadful truth had suddenly glanced on his brain, and as quickly vanished. But a slight incident will often do more in recovering what is lost in the mind than its most intense efforts. Rosalia was singing a new polacca, which was then popular, but of which Monaldi had often expressed his dislike: it was the only instance in which their tastes differed. This difference, at another time too slight even to be noticed, now startled his imagination. The hair-line which divided them now opened to a frightful chasm. He turned for a moment towards the court of his house, then, pressing his hand to his brain, rushed from the gate. Whither he was going he knew not; yet it seemed as if motion gave him the power of enduring what he could not bear at rest; and he con-

tinued to traverse street after street, till, quitting the city, he had reached Ponte Molle, where, exhausted by heat and fatigue, he was at length compelled to stop.

It was one of those evenings never to be forgotten by a painter, but one, too, which must come upon him in misery as a gorgeous mockery. The sun was yet up, and resting on the highest peak of a ridge of mountain-shaped clouds, that seemed to make a part of the distance. Suddenly he disappeared, and the landscape was overspread with a cold, lurid hue; then, as if molten in a furnace, the fictitious mountains began to glow; in a moment more they tumbled asunder; in another he was seen again, piercing their fragments, and darting his shafts to the remotest east, till reaching the horizon, he appeared to recall them, and with a parting flash to wrap the whole heavens in flame.

Monaldi groaned aloud. "No, thou art nothing to me now, thou glorious sun—nothing. To me thou art dead, buried—and for ever—in *her* darkness; hers, whose own glory once made me to love thee; who clothed me with a brightness even more than thine; who followed me like a spirit, in sleep even, visiting my dreams, as if to fill up the blank

of night—to give a continuous splendour to my existence. Oh, idiot, driveller! so to cling to a shadow—a cheat of the senses!—What is she to me now? what can she ever be?—she that is—that ever was"—He could not utter the word.

A desolate vacancy now spread over him, and leaning over the bridge, he seemed to lose himself in the deepening gloom of the scene, till the black river that moved beneath him appeared almost a part of his mind, and its imageless waters but the visible current of his own dark thoughts.

But the mind unused to suffering has a difficulty in admitting calamity, not to be easily overcome. One evidence is seldom enough; for though it may perplex and torture for a time, the very sense of pain will soon force the faculties to return to their wonted action, to pursue again their plans of peace and hope.

Misery was new to Monaldi; he had now endured it for more than two hours, and the intense longing for relief brought on a reaction. "No," said he, starting up, "some fiend has tempted me, and I have mocked myself with monsters only in my brain. She *is* pure—*she must be!*"

CHAPTER XII.

By the time Modaldi reached home, he had nearly brought himself to believe that all he had suffered was from mere delusion.

But he had scarcely crossed his threshold before the violent beating of his heart warned him of a relapse; and he had stopped, with his hand still resting on the latch of the door of the anteroom, to collect his thoughts, when his wife, who was advancing on the other side, and mistaking him for a servant, bade him come in.

"Mercy!" cried Rosalia, drawing back as he entered, "how you frightened me!"

Her surprise at his sudden appearance, though perfectly natural, instantly struck on the troubled brain of her husband as the alarm of guilt, and the worst thought—that perhaps he had supplanted

her gallant—now crossed him. "Ay," said he, with a tone of bitterness, "'tis even *I!*"

The change in his manner now really alarmed her. "Good heaven! Monaldi — what is the matter?"

"I did not know," said Monaldi, his lip quivering as he spoke; "I knew not till *this* day that I could ever become an object of terror."

The look of wildness and misery with which this was uttered, struck to Rosalia's heart: she could make no answer, but, throwing herself on his neck, burst into tears. Monaldi shrunk from her touch as from the coil of a serpent, and he would have shaken her off had not an undefined something in his memory restrained him.

"Dearest husband — oh, speak to me!" said Rosalia, as soon as she could find words. "Are you ill?"

"No."

"Then why do you look so? Has anything happened?"

"Nothing."

"Oh, do not say so; something must—or you would not be thus."

"How thus?"

"As you never were before."

"True, I never—Pshaw—there's nothing the matter; and I have told you I am very well."

"Nothing!"—this was the first instance of reserve since their marriage. Rosalia felt its chill as from an actual blast, and her arms mechanically dropped by her side. Ah, Monaldi! you have yet to know your wife. And yet I ought—I *do* honour your motive; you would spare her pain. But if you knew her heart, you would feel that your unkindest act would be to deny her the privilege of sharing in your sufferings. Hitherto, up to this sad moment, I have been the wife of your joys; a twin being with you in happiness, sharing with you the consciousness of a double existence; for all your thoughts, your wishes, your emotions were mine; and they were all joyous—all—up to this hour. And can you think then so poorly of my heart to suppose that for this accumulation of life—into which, as I look back, almost an age seems pressed—that for all this, which I owe to you alone, it yearns not to make return? And what is the heart's wealth but sympathy? Shall mine become niggard in your distress? No, Monaldi; the heart capable of knowing such felicity

in another's being must wither if it share not in his woe as in his weal.

There is a certain tone—if once heard, and heard in the hour of love—which even the tongue that uttered it can never repeat, should its purpose be false. Monaldi heard it now; there was no resisting that breath from the heart; he felt its truth as it were vibrating through him, and he continued gazing on her till a sense of his injustice flushed him with shame. For a moment he covered his face; then, turning gently towards her, "Rosalia," said he, in a softened accent—but his emotion prevented his proceeding.

"Speak, my dear husband, and tell me that you think me not unworthy to be *one* with you in sorrow. Oh, Monaldi, it seems as if there would almost be pleasure in the pain endured with you! But this I *know*—and the conviction is wrought into my nature—that my soul would not exchange its community even of misery with thee for all of pleasure or of joy which the world could give without thee."

"My wife! thou art indeed my own!" said Monaldi, clasping her to his bosom. "Oh, what a face is this! how poor a veil would it be to any-

thing evil. Falsehood could not hide there." Then quitting her for a moment, he walked up the room. "I have read her every thought," said he to himself; "had they been pebbles at the bottom of a clear stream, they could not have been more distinct. With such a face she cannot be false." As he said this, an expression of joy lighted up his features, and he turned again to his wife. There needed not a word to interpret his look;—she sprang forward, and his arms again opened to receive her.

"My own Monaldi!" said the happy Rosalia.

"Your own indeed! Oh, Rosalia, you know not—you have never known, your whole power. From the moment we first met, it seemed as if my spirit had gone from me, and taken its abode in thee; giving up every thought, every impulse, to be moulded according to thy will. And thou hast made me happier—ay, and wiser, in the mingling with thy pure nature; so happy, that I have sometimes almost doubted if I were not dreaming of the future intercourse between the souls of the blest."

"Let me then, dear husband, continue to you this happiness."

"It lives, as it ever must, in thee."

"Then let me lighten the present load that weighs on your mind; let me share it with you, as I have shared in your joys."

"What load? Am I not happy?—Feel it," said he placing her hand on his heart; "is it not light?"

"Now. But—"

—"But what?"

"Your late distress."

"Did I appear so much distressed?" asked Monaldi, while his conscience smote him for the question.

"You looked—oh, never may you look so again."

"Nay, 'twas half your imagination."

"Monaldi," said Rosalia gravely; "I know you too well: you *will not* say you had no cause for it."

He felt the rebuke, and a pang went to his heart as the meditated falsehood rose to his tongue. It was the first untruth he had ever deliberately consented to. Yet how could he lay open what had passed within him? It would make her miserable; and himself—no, she would not hate, but she must

despise him. "Yes, it must be," said he to himself; "it will at least spare her." He then confessed that he had been a good deal discomposed by a conversation with a brother artist, from whom he had learnt certain facts concerning the baseness of a person in whom he had once felt an interest; and that the shock, together with his long walk, had been, as she had seen, too much for him.

Such was the deception to which Monaldi's unfortunate situation now tempted him. He felt degraded as he uttered it, and was about to excuse himself from giving the particulars, when Rosalia, by a timely interruption, saved him the mortification of further duplicity. "No more," she said; "'tis enough for me to know that calamity has spared you. Besides, I have no woman's curiosity; or, if I have, a friend's misdeed is best buried in silence; 'tis a cause of sorrow into which a wife even may not with delicacy pry."

He took her hand without making any answer.

One day back, this sentiment would hardly have struck him; it would have entered his mind only as a part of the harmonious whole which made her character; now it came contrasted with his own dissimulation, and he thought, as he looked on her,

that he had never before felt the full majesty of her soul.

The meaning of his eyes was felt at her heart, and the blushing wife hid her face in his bosom; for, whether maid or wife, a blush is the last grace that forsakes a pure woman; 'tis the abiding hue with her nature; and never is it seen so truly feminine as when, like hers, it reveals the consciousness of merited praise.

Their happiness now seemed complete, Monaldi even doubting if he had ever been so blest; when a loud ringing at the gate gave a sudden turn to his thoughts. The sound, in spite of himself, recalled the suspicion which had crossed him on entering; for the alarm of his wife was still unexplained; it had passed from him, but no sooner did it return than a rapid revulsion took place in his feelings. He moved away from her, and, averting his face, rested his head upon his hands against the mantelpiece. But the parting with peace is hard; and he made an effort to retain it. "Might she not explain it to his satisfaction?" He looked at her as the question crossed his mind, and his suspicion almost vanished. Yet he could not but wish to know the

cause of her alarm; he should not else feel *sure*. And he again drew near her.

"Rosalia," said he.

"What would you?"

"I was thinking—or rather, it just occurs to me, that when I came in you appeared to be expecting some one. May I ask whom?"

"What, I? No. I expected nobody. You know 'tis not the hour for visitors."

"And yet you seemed alarmed when I entered, as if—"

"What?"

"I were the wrong person."

"Whom could I expect but you?"

"Nay, your exclamation showed that you did not then think of me," said Monaldi, endeavouring to assume a jocular air.

"True I did not, for the length of your absence made me conclude that you were gone to St. Luke's*. I was going into the hall as you lifted the latch; but as you did not come in, I supposed it old Giuseppe, who, you know, is somewhat slow in his movements: so I spoke."

* The Roman Academy of Art.

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the servant to Rosalia. The sternness of his eye shocked her, and she sank back in her chair. "Can it be possible?" said he to himself. "But I will sift it calmly." Then turning to the man, he asked, "What sort of person—was he a gentleman?"

"I believe so," was the answer.

"You *believe!* Could you not see?"

"No, sir; his face was so muffled up, I could not get a glimpse of it."

"Ha!—Do you know," said Monaldi, still addressing the servant, but looking towards his wife, —"do you know the Count Fialto?"

The man aswered in the negative.

"Fialto!" repeated Rosalia, half audibly.

Monaldi caught the echo, and, dismissing the domestic, stood before her for some time without speaking. "Ay," said he at length, "Fialto! Does the name disturb you?"

"Good heaven!" cried Rosalia; "what does this mean?"

"Can it have a meaning?"

"Monaldi, I know not what to make of you."

"Nor I of—But you have not answered my question."

"You have asked none."

"No? Recollect yourself — 'twas about this Count."

"What of him?"

"I only asked why *his* name, more than any other, should so alarm you."

"Alarm me! No, why should I be alarmed?"

"Perhaps I was mistaken, and you were quite tranquil."

"I was surprised, I confess," replied Rosalia; "and my surprise was natural, when I heard the name of such a man joined with a visit to you."

"Why?"

"Because he is so infamous that I cannot but think it degrading to you to hold any intercourse with him, even in the way of your profession; to which alone I can ascribe this visit."

For a moment Monaldi's suspicion was staggered. He turned from his wife, and fixed his eyes on the floor. "Could I believe," said he mentally, "that her heart spoke this; that it is not a gloss, a cunning turn for escape. It might be—and it might not. Heaven and hell are not more wide asunder than the speech and purpose of a dissembling woman. Should she be false!—But I will not be rash. Yet

there is a way—yes—and I will stir her heart, be it of mortal elements; find out the feverish spot, if there be one—lay my finger on it—so that she shall wince,—ay, as from a coal of fire."

"Monaldi, why are you thus? What makes you so absent? Are you displeased that I have spoken thus of this man?"

"Let him speed to hell!" said he, pacing the room violently.

"Dearest husband!" cried Rosalia, stopping him and clinging to him, "what makes you talk thus?"

"Words may sometimes have no meaning."

"But yours have. Something dreadful possesses you."

"'Tis nothing."

"Oh, Monaldi!"

"I have been foolish—very foolish. I ought to be *happy*—ought I not?"

"Oh, if *I* can make you so! You are my all—my very all on earth. I have no wish, no will but yours; and my heart—oh, the wretchedness it now feels—which *you* make it feel—too well bears witness that it is yours, even as if it were beating in your own bosom. Tell me then—command me—what shall I say, or do, to restore your peace?"

Monaldi covered his face, as if he feared to trust himself to look at her: but his resolution endured but for an instant. "Oh, you are an angel!—or —yes," said he, pressing her hand to his forehead —"you *are* an angel. That face would pass the gates of Paradise unquestioned! . . . But a face, a mere face!" he added to himself—"it has duped thousands!" The hand dropped from his grasp. "And words—yes, they are the devil's coin, that has bought millions of souls for eternal slavery. I ought not to trust to them—so many circumstances weigh against her—I ought not. She must be proved. If she stand the proof, then, and not till then—"

"Your words indeed," said Rosalia, "are always kind, even beyond my merit; but your manner—" There was something, though she knew not what, in the impression it had left, which she could not bear to think of, and she stopped.

"My head is dizzy," said Monaldi, waiving her from him—"I cannot talk;" then, throwing himself, or rather sinking into a chair, he relapsed into silence. What passed in his thoughts was too deep for the eye, for his expression indicated nothing.

Rosalia watched his countenance, and thought

she perceived his emotion subsiding. But he was meditating a desperate stroke, and sought to control his features.

"Do you not feel better now?" she asked.

"Who?" said Monaldi; for the question seemed to wake him as from a dream; but instantly collecting himself, he added, "Ay—yes, much better. It was a strange feeling—but it has passed off, and I may yet smile perhaps."

"Oh, that I could see you."

"But not now: it would be too much like the smile of that martyr; and you would not have me set my face by a picture—become the second-hand of a shadow?"

Rosalia, who did not perceive the bitterness of this levity, began to feel somewhat relieved. "Perhaps," she said, "when you tell me what has so moved you, I may pour a balm into your heart that will make you smile even there."

"No, not yet; one day you will know."

"Why not now?"

"No, you would not bear it—(yes, it would crush her if innocent)."

"Nay, there is nothing with, or for thee, that I would not bear."

"No, not now, it must not be. But I will tell you a story."

"A story!"

"Yes," said Monaldi; "will you hear it?"

The wretched wife could only answer with a look of anguish; for the dreadful surmise crossed her that his brain was unsettled.

"'Tis the story of a young artist, once a man of some promise—but whom misery has now levelled with the million. Can you conceive of this?"

"But too well!" replied Rosalia, in a voice that spoke the full extent of her fears.

"Indeed! Then you think that a *painter even* may have a heart to break?"

"Oh, my husband! why—why—"

"Nay," interrupted Monaldi—"what need of any other world has a fellow that builds fantastic ones of his own? Or what has he to do with feelings off his canvas? The world think him *all head*, and will tell you of some who have deliberately mangled, nay even murdered, their models, for the sake of catching a clever agony. What think *you* of such grave facts?"

"They are senseless calumnies."

"Perhaps so. But to the painter,"

"Speak on," said Rosalia, watching his lips with a breathless eagerness, yet dreading every instant to hear what would confirm her suspicion.

Monaldi proceeded. "He had a young and beautiful wife, who was everything—life to him; for he lived only in her; such too did he think he was to her: in a word, they had married for love. Do you mark!—for love."

"I do."

"Well, the first year of their union had passed; and the husband looked back upon it as on a vision dreamed of in some happier planet; yet the past was but a shadow to what he saw in hope—a hint, a type only, to his sanguine imagination, of a more blest reality to come. Foolish mortal! he should have remembered that he was yet on earth; that the thing he loved was of earth—but animated dust, subject to be mixed with, to be debased by, other and grosser particles of its own element. But his delusion was short. There was a man—I was about to call him a devil; but I need not rake hell for his qualities; they are human. Yes, he was a *man*—man in its worst sense; selfish, cruel, sensual. Don't shudder at the picture; for this triple curse of his nature was hidden from the

eye; it lay close in his heart—deep buried in a form of fascinating beauty, and kept from sight by the magic of a tongue that could make even vice seem lovely. Know you one like him?"

"Heaven forbid!"

"No, a woman's eye would not pierce the exterior—it could not read his soul till he had wholly tainted hers. But that—no, it could not yet—"

"What could not yet?"

"Nothing. Well, this man had fixed his eye on the painter's wife. By some means or other, not material to the story, the husband suspected it had reached her heart. Yet he kept it to himself. Do you attend?"

"Go on," said Rosalia, still racked with doubt; "I hear every word."

"'Tis a dismal tale—but so is life."

"Oh, do not say so."

"Perhaps 'tis not: we have yet to prove it. Well, the husband was one night persuaded to go to the theatre: his wife, I know not why, perhaps she pleaded a *head-ach*, remained at home. Do you mind?—she remained at home."

"Well."

"In the box opposite him the husband saw *this man.* The first act was hardly begun when, a billet being brought to him, he left the house. The husband saw what passed; his mind instantly connected the note with his wife. Do you hear?"

"I do."

"Then you *understand?*" said Monaldi, lowering his voice, and looking into her eyes as if he would search her very soul.

"What am I to understand?" said Rosalia.

"That she took advantage of her husband's absence to make an assignation: so he thought; and so—— Ha! she shakes not—it does not move her a jot," said he to himself. "Can her self-possession be forced? Could she hear this with eyes so steady? They did not even wink—but kept on mine, fixed and unconscious, as if she were a picture. Could guilt stand so the look, the tone — my whole prejudging manner? — Impossible! Merciful Heaven! should she be innocent!"

"Will you not go on?" said Rosalia.

"Directly," replied Monaldi, rising, and moving to a window. The twilight had already faded to a faint streak in the horizon, and the smaller stars

were fast gathering in the west; it was what he was wont to call his soul's hour. He threw up the window, and the night-breeze came fresh upon his flushed forehead. "Sweet air of heaven! thou, at least," said he, "art pure. Oh, that I might once more bless thee! that I might love again the light of these stars, and mount, and mix in spirit with yon happy clouds, sailing in peace over the troubled earth!" The wish instantly forced the past into the present, and the contrast struck him to the quick. "Why," he asked, "am I not *now* as once?" His lingering doubt soon answered the question. And doubts are never inactive; if they cannot go forward, they are sure to go back. So it was with Monaldi's; they had no sooner returned than he was flung back in agony to every suspicious word, look, and hint. "No, they are all too connected to be without an object—and what object can they have but her? Do they not all point to her? They do; and her self-possession *must be* assumed. But I will put it to a fiercer test. If she has a particle of love for the wretch, *that* must touch her."

Rosalia now approached, and, taking his hand, begged him to go on with his story; for her dread-

ful misgivings still hung upon her; and she felt impatient to hear him speak, in the hope, faint as it was, that the connexion of his thoughts would be such as to do away her fears. "Come, my love," she said, "finish the tale; 'tis indeed a sad one; but I wish to hear how it ends."

"Do you? . . . . . S'death, she mocks me! I see it now, her coolness is acted. Yes, she shall hear it—and hear the catastrophe that ought to have been hers."

"Come, sit by me," said Rosalia.

Monaldi grasped her hand. "Rosalia—" his voice now deepened to a tone almost terrific—"Rosalia, there are workings of the elements even in the centre of this solid earth. Think you they work of themselves?"

"No."

"Think you, then, that He who gave them impulse, cannot see through the miles of thick matter that incrusts them!"

"Yes; the eye of Heaven sees all that is made."

"And all that is done?"

"Certainly."

"Yet there are creatures, who call themselves rational, that will do deeds that sink their fellows

in misery—deliberately do them; nay, watch and fast, ay, and would pray, too, did hell need it, for their black hour of luck; yet *wink* not even under that all-seeing eye. Perhaps they think not of it, or foolishly hope to hide them in night. Wretched hope! Though the sun were extinguished, and a thicker darkness than ever mortal dreamt of wrapt her about, yet would that eye, swifter than light, pierce to the bed of the adultress."

Monaldi still perceived no change in her.

"What is she made of?" said he to himself. "I talk to the dull ear of a corpse! But there are hearts which defy Heaven, that will yet shrink at the touch of a human hand. If hers be such, she shall feel it."

The intense anxiety of Rosalia, together with the harrowing nature of its cause, had given a fixedness to her expression, which, contrasted with the rapid and violent transitions of thought and feeling in her husband, made her appear to him quite calm and collected. At a time of less excitement, he might have been startled at the almost petrified gaze with which she watched his slightest movement; but now he only felt the contrast of her stillness with his own tumult.

"But the story," said Rosalia—

"I fear you will not relish it."

"Nay, I would hear it, nevertheless."

"Where was I?"

"At the theatre."

"True—I *was* there. But 't is strange *you* should wish to hear it; with a woman's nerves too. Yet no—nothing's strange to me now. I have heard of one who had his funeral *rehearsed*; I once doubted it; but I was then inexperienced. Well, listen. So far her case, if guilty—now to what should have followed.

"In order to give time for the paramours to meet, the husband delayed his return home for near an hour; then, having a master-key, he let himself in without noise. The parlour, as he expected, was vacant. Mark—I am coming to a close. The wife, it seems, was in her chamber; and the chamber, like *ours*, at the head of the stairs —*suppose it ours*. When the husband reached the landing-place, hearing a stir in the room, he concealed himself behind the pedestal of a statue—as, it might be, *the one near our chamber*. Do you note? Keep the *place* in your mind."

"I will."

"And *imagine it in this house*."

"Well."

"Oh, 'twill be *better!*—Where was I?—Oh, behind the statue. He had scarcely taken his station there, before the door opened. His suspicion was now confirmed; the wife was giving her paramour a parting embrace. To hell! cried the husband, springing upon them with a furious bound—and his sword in an instant pinned the wife and the wretch Fialto to the door!"

"Horrible!" said Rosalia, shuddering.

"Ha!" cried Monaldi, crushing her hand within both of his, "was it well done?"

Rosalia, whose Christian temper revolted at murder, even to avenge the most atrocious wrong, was too much shocked to reply. But her face spoke anything but guilt; and Monaldi *felt* its meaning, yet fearing to trust to it, he hurried on.

"But Fialto; speak—did *he* deserve it?"

"The galleys even," said Rosalia, with a look of disgust.

"How! is that worse than death?"

"Is he not still living, and at large? You spoke of him to-night as if you supposed him the person who rang at the gate."

"True, true—he does live; he recovered."

"Infamous wretch!"

"What, not forgive him! His beauty remains the same; and that, with your sex, will atone for many sins."

"*This to me?* Oh, Monaldi!"

"She *is* innocent!" exclaimed Monaldi, falling on his knees, and clasping his hands. "Thank God!"

"*Who* is innocent?" said the astonished wife.

"You!"

"I! Of what?"

"Of everything—of the shadow even of evil. Thou art all purity!"

"What is this enigma? Monaldi, why do you say this to me?"

Monaldi's eyes fell: for a moment the question confused him; but soon recovering, he replied, "Can you ask? Are you not the very opposite of the wretched adultress? And can I know it—feel it, as I do, without bursting forth in joy!"

The coherence of the tale had now satisfied Rosalia of her husband's sanity. But the time he had chosen—his manner of telling it—and his un-

usual excitement, stlil perplexed her. "It must," she thought, "in some way concern himself, or it would not have taken such hold of him. But how? Might it not be what he first alluded to; the same that caused his emotion before he returned home? It was the perfidy, he said, of one he had formerly esteemed. But could this Count have been that friend? It must be so; for it seems he thought him the person who just rang at the gate, and the mention of his name naturally brought the story more vividly to his mind. Then he might have known the unfortunate husband. Yes; it is so."

These thoughts passed so rapidly through Rosalia's mind, that the first and last seemed almost to meet in the same instant. "It is so," she repeated aloud. "Monaldi, I no longer wonder, for I now understand the cause of your emotion."

Monaldi stood aghast. He thought she had divined the object of his suspicion, and her contempt seemed ready to overwhelm him.

"You know," she added, "the unfortunate husband?"

He breathed again. "I do."

"Is he your friend?"

"There is but one on earth dearer—yourself."

"Monaldi, I honour this deep feeling, now I know the cause—much as I have suffered from it."

"And did you suffer?"

"More than I can express; for I thought—it makes me shudder as I recal it—"

"What!"

"That your brain was injured."

"Alas," thought he, "how near the truth!"

"What a heart is yours! If you feel thus for another, what would have been your misery, had *you* been the poor husband?"

"Do not let us think of it," said he, "it makes my flesh creep to imagine even—"

"Ah," said Rosalia, with a melancholy smile, "that same imagination would be a fearful master over such a heart as yours."

"Never can it become so," replied Monaldi, kissing her forehead; "never, while my heart clings to such a reality. Look on me, Rosalia—Oh, how beautiful is Truth when it looks out from the eyes of a pure woman! Such, if ever visible,

should be its image—the present shadowing of that hallowed harmony which the soul shall hereafter know in substance."

"My husband!" Rosalia could say no more.

The night now closed upon them, and they sunk to sleep with hearts too full for another wish.

CHAPTER XIII.

MONALDI'S fears were now allayed; for though some of their causes were still unexplained, he studiously drove them from his mind, as too light to outweigh the evidence which his former experience and Rosalia's whole manner had opposed to them.

This respite was not a little favoured by Fialto's absence, almost a month having passed since Monaldi had seen him. But the Count was not idle; he was only waiting till chance should furnish him with means to strike the last blow. With this view he had contrived to make himself acquainted with all Monaldi's movements, which he effected by means of a domestic who had formerly been one of his creatures. Antonio, the name of the man, had imposed on Monaldi by an artful tale of distress, and been taken into his service from motives of charity. But Antonio was not of a nature

to be turned from his course by any act of kindness; he seldom troubled himself about any motives but his own, and his present one, the hope of a large reward, was strong enough to keep him faithful to his employer.

It was not long after this, that Monaldi received a letter from the steward of one of his estates near Genezzano, requiring his presence on some urgent business; and mentioning the circumstance, together with his intention of setting out on his journey the next day, while Antonio was waiting at dinner, it was accordingly made known to Fialto without loss of time.

Nothing could have suited the Count better. Genezzano was more than thirty miles from Rome. Monaldi must calculate on being absent at least two days.

What use Fialto made of these circumstances will appear by the following letter, written as if in answer to one from Rosalia:—

"A thousand, thousand, thousand thanks, dearest Rosalia, for your precious letter. The rapture —but a truce with raptures till we meet—for I have only time to say that I shall be punctual to

the hour you have appointed—at twelve to a minute. Oh, that to-morrow were come! Could anything be more fortunate than this journey to Genezzano? I could almost worship your easy man for his accommodating spirit. He is certainly a most obliging husband: perhaps 'tis to make up for not leaving us longer together the other night, when he went to the theatre. You desire me not to reply to your note, 'because 'tis unnecessary, and you fear needless risks.' But for once I must disobey you, and do so that you might learn to rely more in future on the prudence of your devoted FIALTO."

The letter being prepared, the next step was to have it seen by the husband. But chance again made that easy, for it was now the very evening on which he was accustomed to make his weekly visit to St. Luke's. Fialto knowing this, had therefore only to take his former station at the gate, and pretending to mistake Monaldi for a servant, put the letter into his hand. The night was as dark as could have been wished for so evil a purpose. He accordingly took his station at the proper time, when a loud coughing by Antonio

gave notice of his master's approach. Immediately after, Monaldi's footstep was heard in the gateway. "So you are come at last," said Fialto, speaking low and rapidly; "but not a word, good Giuseppe, we may be overheard. There, take that to your mistress; and there's postage." So saying, he thrust the letter, with a piece of gold, into Monaldi's hand, and in another moment he was gone.

The rapidity with which this was said and done, left no time for reply, had Monaldi attempted it; but the words "Giuseppe" and "mistress" were enough; he did not even hear the rest, for they seemed to stun him, and he stood for a while passing the letter from one hand to the other in a kind of vacant distress, till the sharp sound of the gold, as it fell and rang on the pavement, again brought him to his senses. It was then he began to feel that he was possessed at last of what would decide his fate. He returned to the house, and shutting himself up in his library, placed the letter on the table before him. Its superscription was plain—to his wife; yet he hesitated for a moment whether he should open it. But his mind was not in a state for refining; he could perceive only one

alternative — complete conviction or interminable suspicion; and he broke the seal. The letter dropped from his hand, and his head sunk on the table in agony. But this blow, though surer, could not have the same effect with the first; for his mind had been prepared by previous suffering, had been warned, as it were, of the probable evil, and been tempered by that warning to bear what might else have driven him to madness. He had now indeed a nearer and more certain cause for wretchedness, but it was what had once been expected, and wanted the force of newness; besides, it was now distinct, had a positive shape; and the power of enduring calamity is generally proportioned to its reality; as the mind can oppose its strength to what is real, as substance resisting substance, but has no strength, no power, to repel the intangible and ever-multiplying phantoms of the imagination.

Monaldi felt that his doom was now sealed, and he rose from his seat with a desperate calmness; for his last doubt was gone, and with it seemed to have fled every conflicting emotion. In this state he continued for almost half an hour, his arms folded, and his eyes wandering without object,

when a glance at the letter gave a fiercer impulse to his thoughts. He took it up and again attempted to read it; but he had scarcely finished the first sentence, when, dashing it with fury to the floor, he stamped upon it with a violence that shook the very walls. "Witch, sorceress, devil!" he cried, half choked with rage—"thus, thus will I crush thee!" At that moment the door opened and Giuseppe entered. "Wretch!" cried Monaldi, seizing him by the throat. "I beg pardon," said the man, trembling. "I did not know you were at home, sir, but hearing a noise, I thought something had fallen."

This speech gave Monaldi time to recover himself. "True," said he, "it was that bust; it must have been carelessly put up; but you need not stay to replace it now—I am engaged."

"Yes," said Monaldi, as the servant withdrew, "and *I too* will play the hypocrite. Truth is no match for falsehood; 'tis only hypocrisy can circumvent treachery. I will still appear the *easy man*, the *obliging husband*—and the pander Giuseppe shall still think his master the blind gull. Yes, I will *seem* to go this journey—still seem to

make amends for returning so soon from the theatre. Oh, my true Genius, how clearly didst thou note to me that polluted hour! Yet how she bore herself—with what a face she looked when I told the tale that painted it! Oh, woman, could your heart be seen in your face, we should love toads sooner. But thou, painted toad! like a scorpion will I meet thee. The appointment, it seems, was made by her; and she forbids an answer. Yes, she knew he was not the man to fail. This letter then is not expected—of course its miscarriage will not be discovered. Nothing could have fallen out better—better! for what? For the sealing of my misery! Then be it so—ha! ha! Oh, that I had an enemy—how impotent would now be his wrath! what would be the gall of ten thousand deadly hearts now poured upon mine—mine, that is filled with it? that already sweats it? But I will not keep it long there; it shall soon out like a flood—shall drench, shall drown this hot bird of paradise—ay, even in her very nest! Yes, I will go this journey, and she, Giuseppe, and all, shall see me go with a cheerful face, and a light heart—yes, light of the world; for nothing here can again touch it, it

moves now in an element of its own. And when they think me at Genezzano—ha ! ha ! I shall then reach my zenith."

So saying, he rang the bell, and left Giuseppe to clear aware the fragments of the bust. Then quitting the house, he proceeded to the Academy.

It may seem strange, but it is nevertheless true, that with some natures there is a point in misery where they will sport with their sufferings, and appear to take a kind of dreadful pleasure in magnifying them, nay, even task the future, and fly to it with the hope for something more, some deeper woe, to keep their minds in action—which solves the mystery.

Monaldi needed no additional proof of his wife's infidelity ; his conviction was complete ; yet he thirsted for more—for the last drop of the bitterest of all draughts.

But the part of a dissembler was still new to him, and difficult, and had always been revolting to his nature ; it was now become more so that it seemed to be forced upon him by her in whom, of all on earth, he had most confided. Yet he went through it : that he did so was not a little owing to the shortness of his trial, it being near midnight

before he returned home; perhaps, however, more owing to the trusting temper of his wife, who, seeing only his apparent cheerfulness, could hardly have suspected an opposite feeling without a change in her character; for, except in very glaring cases, the senses may be said to live in an atmosphere of the mind.

Had Monaldi's suffering been unmixed with the hope of vengeance, he might have found disguise impossible; but falsehood is of the family of revenge, and a snare and a mask are never wanted when needed; it was this prepared him for the meeting, and he entered the house with a smile. Rosalia looked up, and gave it back from her heart; for the smile of one we love cannot be seen unanswered.

"How beautiful," thought Monaldi, "may even a lie look!—O Sin, take always this form, and the world, with all its grave philosophy, its solemn pomp of reason, is yours. But *I* know its hollowness, its—" The thought was too revolting; yet still the smile remained—but it was the smile which misery gives as her last token, the mark which she sets upon her own.

Before Monaldi returned home, he had worked

himself up to this interview by desperately recalling every past endearment, every audible and silent manifestation of tenderness; in short, all that he was wont to go to and brood over in secret; but they came not now as once, like definite and luminous points in his life; for now every word, and look, and delicate caress, brought with them the hateful image of Fialto. "They are no longer mine," said he; "they never were! And I can hear them, see them—do all, but feel them again. Can she touch again the heart that loves only purity? The fictitious life which her false spirit gave to it is gone—for ever. 'Tis now dead. Could it feel this stony stillness were it not so? Let her talk and look then—she will talk to ears that hear not, look to eyes that are glazed. But yet—yes, I will mock her; mock her with a phantom of the love she has murdered—murdered while she smiled; she shall still think it lives, and lives for her!"

Morally his heart *was* dead. But what must have been the agony with which a heart so gentle, so generous, and noble, stiffened into death!

Let no one marvel at this change, sudden as it may seem; for there is no limit to human incon-

sistency. A single circumstance has often transformed the firmest nature, making the same being his own strongest contrast; many things—injury, ingratitude, disappointment—may do it; in a word, anything which robs a man of that which gives a charm to his existence; and chiefly and most rapid will the change be with those of deep and social feelings, who live in others. Such is man when left to himself; and there is but one thing which can make him consistent—RELIGION; the only unchanging source of moral harmony. But Monaldi, unhappily, knew little of this. Not that he was wholly without religion; on the contrary, his understanding having assented to its truths, he believed himself a good christian; but he wanted that vital faith which mingles with every thought and foreruns every action, ever looking through time to their fruits in eternity. The kindness and generosity of his disposition had hitherto stood in its stead; he had delighted in making others happy, and thought nothing a task which could add to their consolation or welfare. But hitherto he had been happy, and his life had seemed to him like one of fresher ages; like the first stream that wandered through Eden, sweet and pure in itself,

and bearing on its bosom the bright and lovely images of a thousand flowers. Would one so full not sometimes overflow? or would one *so filled* often thirst for what is spiritual, for what belongs to the dim and distant future? preparing in the hour of peace for the hour of temptation? Then he had met with no adversity, with no crosses to wean him gradually from this delightful paradise; no sorrow to lift his soul to that where trouble cannot enter. But though the present world seemed enough, and more than enough for him, in reality it was nothing; it was only through *one* of earth that he saw and loved all else; she alone filled his heart, modified his perceptions, and shed her own beauty over every vision of his mind. Now she was lost to him; torn away by a single wrench: And could this have been without leaving a fearful void? To Monaldi's heart she was all; and his all was now gone, leaving it empty. An empty human heart!—an abyss the earth's depths cannot match. And how was it now to be filled? His story will show.

The further operations of Fialto depending on the success of his letter, he had instructed Antonio to watch his master's motions, and report accord-

ingly. It was possible, he thought, that Monaldi might escape the snare by openly accusing his wife, and examining Giuseppe; in which case the conspiracy would end at once; a result, however, but barely possible. It was more probable that Monaldi would set out on his journey without coming to an explanation; if he did so, only one conclusion could follow—that he would return secretly, and at the hour of the assignation; whether to satisfy his doubts or revenge was immaterial; and for this event Fialto was provided, having ordered Antonio to engage a person to watch his master and follow him back to the city, in order to give notice of his return, the signal agreed upon being a little Venetian air, which the man was to play as soon as Monaldi should have entered his house.

At an early hour the next morning Antonio made his report, and Fialto found his hopes confirmed. Monaldi had set out on the journey apparently in good spirits, and unattended. The spy was also gone; and a truer hound was never put on the trail.

It was now again night, and it only remained for Fialto to gain admittance into the house. To

make this easy, Antonio had purposely lost a bet to Giuseppe, to be paid in a flask of Orvietto. While the servants were engaged with the wine, Antonio stole out, and admitted the Count secretly, in the disguise of a friar.

Antonio having locked the door of his master's dressing-room, had secured the key early in the morning, in order that Rosalia might suppose he had taken it with him; of course she would not think of going to it now. In this room, or rather closet, Fialto took his station; he then threw off his disguise, and locked the door. The closet opened into Rosalia's bed-chamber, and the chamber was up only one flight of stairs, and looked upon the street; a circumstance which the Count had considered with a view to his escape, to facilitate which he had provided a ladder of ropes, for, bold as he was, he had little taste for perils that promised nothing.

The clock struck eleven, and Fialto heard the chamber door open, and a light step pass the closet; this was followed by a slight movement as of one undressing. "'Tis she," he thought. Then it was still again. He looked through the key-hole to see if she was in bed, and saw her kneeling

before a crucifix. "How like my poor nun!—Pshaw—that's past. What eyes! But what's her beauty to me—at least now? The yellow face of a sequin is more to my present liking. Yes, Maldura's gold has made me a match for St. Antony. There," added he, withdrawing his eyes, "go to bed in peace; I doubt 'tis the last time. But there are millions who never taste it—and why should she? she may find a substitute, as I do, in pleasure."

A few minutes after, he heard her rise and get into bed. "She has left the lamp burning. So much the better; there will be no mistake as to my person. 'Tis a foolish business though; but—Ha! what's that?" It was only the faint sigh that usually precedes sleep. He put his ear to the key-hole, and heard a low, regular breathing. "So soon gone? And she sleeps like an infant. Would that I—but that's folly."

Fialto's thoughts now took a rapid flight to long past and almost forgotten scenes; and Rosalia, Monaldi, and his purpose, all seemed to have vanished from his mind, when the chiming of the last quarter brought him back to the present.

"Dare I trust myself now," thought he, after a

pause; "dare I venture to look at her? And why not? Are not all my passions bagged in Maldura's purse?—I will look at her."

There is a majesty in innocence which will sometimes awe the most reprobate. As Fialto stood by the bed, a strange sensation came over him, and something like compunction crossed his brain; but it sunk not deeper—for nothing of like nature had reached his heart for many years; and the feeling, whatever it was, passed off in words.

"How like death," said he, "to all around her; and yet how living in herself. And her thoughts —how they play over her face; to her, perhaps, they are the parts of a world—a world all her own. Pity she should ever wake to another. That smile, I never saw but one like it." Some early recollection here probably crossed his mind, and he turned away. "Curse thee, Maldura, for a villain in essence! Wert thou starving, like me, there might be some excuse. But I—I *am* starving; and that's enough. Nay, suppose I were weak enough to forego this exaction of my necessities, would those eyes ever deign to drop a tear for me after I am gone? No, her precious morality would

bid her rejoice. Yes; and the most moral world too would all join her; ay, all." Fialto's evil genius here touched the right chord: for nothing makes vengeance so indiscriminate as the consciousness of being generally hated. "Yes, they would trample on my grave, and make a jest of the dead libertine. But I'll spoil their sport for the present. Ha! the signal!" At that moment the spy's guitar was heard from the street. Fialto immediately raised the window, and, throwing out his disguise, let down the ladder of ropes. This was hardly done when he heard a cautious step ascending the staircase. He then slipped off his coat, and took his station beside the bed, till hearing the step approach the door, he awoke Rosalia. In the same instant Monaldi burst into the room. Rosalia shrieked, and Fialto, springing to the window, in the next moment was in the street.

"Mercy! oh, mercy!" cried Rosalia, throwing herself at Monaldi's feet, whom the confusion of her terror made her mistake for a robber.

"Ay, strumpet!" said he, in a voice scarcely articulate, "more than you have shown to me." So saying, with a frantic laugh, he plunged his

dagger into her bosom. She fell back with a groan, and her blood, spirting up, covered his hands. A horrible silence now followed, and Monaldi stood over her, as if a sudden frost had stiffened his face and figure in the very expression and attitude with which he gave the blow.

Rosalia had been stunned by the fall; but the flowing from her wound soon brought back her senses; she looked up, and for the first time recognised her husband. "Merciful heaven! you —from you!" The blow now reached her soul, and she covered her face with her hands. "Oh, Monaldi—why have you done this?"

"Repent—repent!" said he, moving away.

"Stay, oh stay!" cried Rosalia, with a piercing energy.

"What would you?"

"Much. But look at me—I am your wife, Monaldi."

"Wife! Never. But I have forgiven it. You are nothing to any one now but—to Him who made you. Look to it, then—waste not your limited hour on one you never loved."

"Never loved—whom?"

"Oh woman, cannot death make thee honest? Me!"

"You!—oh, Monaldi. But, ha! there must be something—yet my brain is so confused—that man—it was not a dream; no, I was awake. Tell me—who seized me just now in the bed? it could not have been you."

"Oh, hardened to the core! Rosalia, know you that you are dying?"

"Too well—I feel 'tis my last hour."

"Repent then."

"Oh, tell me," said Rosalia—"'tis too late—I am very faint;" and she sunk back exhausted.

Monaldi now looked on her with a compassion that made him shudder; for, base as he thought her, he felt as if he could give his heart's blood to save her soul. "No," said he, "she must not die so." Then, hastily making a bandage with his handkerchief, he succeeded, with some difficulty, in stanching the wound. In a few minutes, her strength returned.

"Thank God! there may yet be time; I'll for a surgeon;" and he made a movement as if to leave the room.

But Rosalia, perceiving it, with a violent effort

threw herself forward, and, clasping his knees, locked them with an agony that shook his whole frame.

"Why is this?" said Monaldi; "why trifle thus? Make your peace with heaven."

"Heaven is merciful; be thou so too. No, my husband, you are not cruel; this last act shows it —you have bound up the wound, and bless you for it! Then deny me not—but tell me—why was this deed? Oh, speak."

"And you do not know?"

"As I have hope of heaven."

"Woman!" said Monaldi, shaking her off with horror, "thou standest even now in presence of the Eternal; darest thou then lie?"

"I do not lie—before heaven, I do not."

"Horrible! And you know not perhaps him I found here?"

"As God is my judge. I was asleep when he seized me, and that seemed at the very instant you entered."

"Yet you asked for mercy—"

"My terror confounded me, and I supposed you both robbers."

"Know you then that writing?" It was Fialto's letter.

Rosalia took the letter, and, glancing at the signature, for a moment seemed convulsed with emotion; but it was only for a moment, and she read it through with steadiness. She then calmly placed it beside her, and attempted to kneel, but her strength failing her, she could only clasp her hands and raise her eyes to heaven.

"I murmur not," she said—"I murmur not, O Father, that thou hast been pleased to permit this work of darkness against me; for thou art all-wise as thou art good. And not for myself do I now call on thy name—thou knowest that I am guiltless—but for him I leave. Spare him, merciful Being; impute not this blow to him; for even now he repents it; and, oh, spare him, in thy great mercy, when he shall know my truth, when he shall find too late that the love I bore him had only thee for its sharer—that, but for thy grace, it had been idolatry. Oh, spare him then, for he will need thy mercy."

Monaldi listened as she spoke, like one in a trance; he lost not a word, and they fell on his

heart like arrows of fire; for so comes truth when it comes too late; yet he neither spoke nor moved, as if the agony of conviction had brought with it a doubt whether the falsehood he had believed were not less intolerable.

Rosalia now turned to him, and in a feebler, though still unbroken voice, continued. "Monaldi, hear me, for the hand of death is upon me. I die *innocent*—innocent of all but too much loving thee. Your deed—'tis my last prayer—may God, as I do, forgive it. You were greatly tempted; for the seeming proof of my guilt could not be stronger. Why it was contrived, only the Searcher of hearts can tell; for I know not an enemy that we have. Yet that you or I have—and a deadly one—is sure. But him, too, I forgive."

"No!" said Monaldi, in a voice of anguish, "never could a wanton so speak!"

"Now, oh, now," said Rosalia, "I die in peace: you believe me?"

"I do," he cried, straining her to his bosom, "with my whole soul! Oh, Rosalia, my wife—" but he could not go on; for though his eyes were dry, a convulsive sobbing choked his utterance.

"Nay, my husband, do not take it so to heart.

Think of my hopes—of my blessed change. Oh, no—death has no sting for a Christian."

"Death!" cried Monaldi, starting up—"death!" The word seemed, as it were, to explode in his brain, and his head whirled. Then came fearful imaginings, and with them a confused rush of the past, mingling with the present.

Rosalia now felt her strength fast ebbing; but her heart still clung to her husband, and she begged that she might die in his arms. He made no answer; she called to him again—but he was talking to the air.

"Dead! dead, did you say? No, she lives.—But what's here? These accursed hands—look, Rosalia—see the heart they tore from you. Red, red—it beats; look, look, how it leaps! No; you shall not go—speak to me—ha, gone! now, now I have you again."

"His brain wanders!"

"Ha! it speaks—strange! strange!"

"Save him, oh, save him!" cried Rosalia. She could add no more; her head sunk upon her shoulder, and her eyes closed.

"Who brought it here?" said Monaldi, shrinking from the body; "'tis cold. Let the bones be

buried, though Fialto's; they should not lie on the ground. Landi, why are you here? Oh, 'tis you, Rosalia—so you stabbed him! Well!—ha! ha! very well. How he bleeds! Blood! blood! Give me your hand. Nay, that's bloody too. But hark! those bloody daggers — don't you hear them? look; there are a thousand. Monstrous! they fight in the air—they follow us! Oh, save her! save her!" he cried, with a piercing shriek, and rushed from the chamber.

CHAPTER XIV.

FIALTO had returned home about an hour, and was deliberating whether to call on Maldura then or to wait till morning, when Antonio, livid and breathless, staggered into the room.

"How now!" said the Count, somewhat startled at his appearance. "What brings you here? speak, man—what makes you look so like a thing dug up?"

"She 's dead," said Antonio.

"Who is dead?"

"She, my mistress."

In spite of Fialto's hardness he felt a twinge at his heart. "Poor thing!" said he, after a short pause. "This is more than I bargained for. But how was it, Antonio?"

"That is more than I know," replied Antonio. "All I can tell is, that about one o'clock, just as I

had fallen asleep, I was suddenly roused by a frightful shriek — such another I never heard. What it might be never entered my head; for I was so confused that I had quite forgotten your plot, and what was likely to come of it; so I sprang out of bed, and ran to the staircase. Holy Francesco, how he looked!"

"Who?"

"My master—his face and hands bloody, and his eyes so wild—the great lamp was burning in the corridor, and I saw him rush past it."

"Come, leave crossing your lizard's liver," said Fialto, "and go on."

"I have done," answered Antonio: "he was gone before I could reach the corridor."

"Dolt! your mistress — how know you she is dead?"

"I entered her chamber with the other servants, whom the same noise had brought from their beds. She was lying on the floor, and—"

"Enough," said the Count, "I have other business for you now."

"I hope," stammered Antonio—"I hope 'tis nothing like—"

A look from Fialto cut short the sentence. "I

must hence to-night," said he, "so I shall want horses: look to it that they are in readiness within an hour. In the meantime I will see Maldura. Do you hear? within an hour."

"His hands bloody!" said Fialto, after Antonio left him. "Then the deed was his. I did not think the painter had so much of the devil in him. Maldura said he was all milk; that he would part and pine, but never dare shed blood. Had he been a fool it might have been so; but there is no trusting your gentle tempers where there's a spark of genius: they are like quiet waters over volcanoes. Thou art a precious hell-hound, Maldura! Yet I might have foreseen this, for I have known such men — but I did not. Well, 'tis done; and—let it go. So there 's an end on 't."

CHAPTER XV.

THERE are some men who can daily await, and even count the hours up to, a threatened bereavement, with little discomposure; not so much from want of feeling as from a constitutional repugnance to the admission of any definite form to a future evil; they know it will come, but it is virtually a *mere name* so long as they possess the present. Yet there is a moment when the present and future may be said to unite, and to produce, like the mingling of light and darkness, a kind of twilight image of both: 't is in the last counted hour. As in grief, so it is in guilt: and so was it with Maldura. Whilst his revenge was maturing, he had watched its progress with a moody quietness; but now that the deadly fruit was ripe, and he saw it hanging by the last fibre, ready at the breath of the next minute to drop into his hand, he could

not help shrinking back with a fearful misgiving of its bitterness.

He had retired to bed at his usual hour. But he had closed his eyes and composed his limbs in vain; he could not sleep; the tide of his thoughts was not to be stopped, neither could he force them into other than the troublous channel they had taken; they still rushed on in spite of his will; till, wearied and maddened by his fruitless efforts, he sprang out of bed. He then dressed himself, and, taking a book, began to read aloud; but the sounds he uttered conveyed no meaning to his brain. At last the clock struck one—the half hour—two. "'Tis over!" said he, throwing the book from him. "Fool! torment yourself no longer for what is past recall. Pshaw! this shaking is mechanical—the coward body. Well, here's a remedy for that," seizing a goblet of wine. "Yes, the soul is still firm; as it should be in triumph. Ay, triumph; for revenge—what is it? A mere speculation? a freak of the mind, beginning in a day-dream and ending as it began—in nothing? Has it not relation to time, place, object? and can a thing unreal hold such relation? No. 'T is then a reality; if so, can it come of nothing? No, 't is

a consequence of something. What then is that something — Injury! Let the Monaldis then blame themselves. If they would know the cause of my revenge, let them remember, that *she* rejected me—that *he* supplanted me! Tush! no more of this."

With such wretched sophistry did Maldura endeavour to silence his conscience, when Fialto entered.

"Nay, start not," said the Count, as Maldura drew back to let him pass; "'t is your good genius—the best, I 'll be sworn, in your whole calendar of devils. What, dumb? No greeting for your faithful Abaddon—your plenipotentiary to the powers below? Why, man, you look as if I had actually come thence, and brought with me an atmosphere unpolite."

"You have license, Count," observed Maldura, "to speak of yourself as you please."

"And of you too, I hope."

"You come, I suppose, to tell me the affair is over."

"A word first," said Fialto. "I take it, Maldura, you are a man of honour?"

"Why that question, sir?"

"Because it often happens, that when a pupil first enters Lucifer's school, he thinks it regular to bigin in the lowest forms, such as lying, word-breaking, cheating, &c."

"Fialto," interrupted Maldura fiercely, "if I thought you dared suspect me—"

"Not so hot, man. I suspect no one. I only wish to be sure of my ground."

"Well, sir, what is your drift?"

"Merely to know if you mean to abide by your contract."

"Dare you doubt it?"

"You know I dare anything. But you have well spoken; and I do not doubt you. Now to business. The draughts on your banker at Bologna, I think, are already signed?"

"There, sir; look at them."

"Right. But there were five hundred sequins in gold for present expenses. Ah, they are in this bag. All right."

"To a baiocco, sir," said Maldura.

"I don't doubt it," said the Count, sweeping the gold and bills from the table. "And thus ends my diplomacy; for the game is up, and the wages of sin are won!"

Though Maldura had anticipated this, and thought himself prepared, he needed all his pride to conceal the numbing horror that now seized him. "'Tis over then," said he faintly; "well—" but he could not proceed.

"Ha! he quails," said Fialto to himself. "'T is well; he shall shake yet to his midriff for putting meon this cursed business. But how 's this, my gallant principal—you don't seem to rejoice?"

"You don't know me," replied Maldura, endeavouring to force a laugh; but the sound only rattled in his throat.

"Ay, that was a merry laugh, but rather too dry. You should drink, man; joy is thirsty by nature — especially of the grim breed. There, pledge me now in a reeling bumper to the black knight of revenge."

"'T is sweet!" said Maldura, emptying the goblet, and assuming an air of hardihood.

"What?"

"Revenge."

"Oh, delicious, no doubt. But I haven't given you the particulars."

"Why, no matter for them now; 'tis enough that the affair is over."

"As you please. But there 's one thing I must touch on. There was, I think, an additional clause, a kind of codicil to our contract—that if your *friends* parted, the reward was to be doubled. Was it not so?"

"It was; but you cannot claim that *yet*."

"Suppose I could? You remember you are a man of honour."

"You may see I have not forgotten it," answered Maldura, producing another draught.

"'Tis mine, then," said Fialto, seizing it.

"Impossible!"

"Then impossibilities have come to pass."

"Count Fialto," said Maldura, rising, "I doubt you trifle with me."

"In honourable earnest," replied Fialto, carelessly. "They parted exactly at one o'clock; that is, if Antonio's watch be right."

"Parted! and you know it so soon?"

"Even so; and what's better, *so* parted, that all the priests in Christendom could never re-unite them."

"How! what mean you?"

"The woman's dead—that's all."

"Dead!"

"Ay, dead as Santa Rosalia herself. Glorious! isn't it? What! dumb with joy? I thought you would be, and kept it for a *bonne-bouche* that would send its savour to your very heart. But that is not all—the best is to come. She was murdered—murdered, too, by her milksop husband."

Maldura staggered, and fell back into his seat.

"Ha!" continued Fialto, advancing, and raising his voice, "why don't you laugh—shout? Hey? shout—dance, sing *io triumphe*, man! for the deed is done past all undoing; ay, done, and bruited, and chronicled too by this time in all the infernal gazettes!"

"Monster!" exclaimed Maldura, recoiling from him.

"Which of us!"

"Leave me, fiend! Blasted be the hour that brought us together."

"What, ho! did you think to raise the devil, and expect him to leave his work half done? I thought you knew him better; for I never saw one who looked and talked so like his cater-cousin. Marvellous! Why, you were wont to brood over this precious plot like some dark hell-bird in the

incubation of an imp; and now that the thing is hatched, you shrink, and turn craven before your own offspring."

"Begone, villain!" cried Maldura, starting up, and moving to a distance.

"Softly, my worthy compeer," said the Count. "*Devil* as often as you please; but my honour brooks no vulgar appellation of earth."

"Leave me then, devil! and curse me no more with your hateful presence."

"Hateful! What! hateful to Maldura?" said Fialto, with a sneer. "Then I must be *above* him. On my life, this is supposing me to have reached an elevation in iniquity to which I never dared aspire. But you do yourself injustice. Why, *I* am but a thing of clay—a mere receptacle of appetites; and, evil though they be, they are yet human; in other words, I'm a man—bad, if you will, but too gross, too material, to be named with —what shall I call thee? The very sentiment, the idea, the unimpassioned essence of sin! If I prey on others, I only transfer something from their needs to my own; if I deceive, 'tis only for a craved advantage; and if I pull down, 'tis only to build up for myself: so that nothing is lost. In

short, my utmost scope is barely to anticipate time, and now and then, perhaps, to forestall fortune in her eternal mutations. But thou—thou art above profiting by thy actions; for thou deprivest for the pleasure of bereaving—destroyest for the gust of destruction: in a word, thy sins find their end in nothing, and vanish, like abstractions, in the dark joyless abyss of thy soul."

Maldura, trembling with rage, unsheathed his dagger—but guilt had cowed him; he stood a moment irresolute, and the weapon dropped from his hand.

"I would that I could pity thee," said Fialto, observing the action, and fixing his eye on the dagger; "but—pah! my soul sickens at a coward."

"Ruffian! robber!" screamed Maldura, snatching up the dagger, and rushing on him with fury.

"Another step," said the Count, presenting a pistol, "and your brains shall spatter these walls."

Maldura retreated a few paces, and, seizing a chair, with a horrible execration, dashed it in shivers against the wall. "Thus! thus!" said he, "shall it be with thee! Remember the *nun!*"

"Dost thou threaten?" replied Fialto, advancing; then stopping short—"No," he added, "I will not hazard my life by taking thine in this place. Besides, thy menace is too impotent to claim a thought; my secret is safe enough in thy cowardly keeping. The nun wants no better guard than the ghost of Rosalia: they are now leagued; summon the one, then, and raise the other—if thou darest. Ha! does the name of Rosalia shake thee? How then wilt thou stand it when all Rome shall couple it with thine—her destroyer? That thou art so, and without benefit to thyself, is why I hate thee. As for my part in the business—I acted in my need, and under thee, thou superlative tempter! so the world would not waste a curse on me. But what tempted thee? Oh! I forgot—thou art a poet. Well, thou hast reached the ideal of sin; and I give thee joy of thy bloody chaplet."

"Leave me, or poniard me, unmerciful dog!" cried Maldura, in a voice hoarse and scarcely articulate.

"Thou shalt have thy wish," said Fialto, turning contemptuously towards the door. "But I leave thee this advice, Maldura: Ride not wide of Rome. Should we meet again at Radicofani, my

stiletto, perhaps, may do, for once, some service to the world." So saying, he left the house, and a moment after the clatter of hoofs gave notice of his departure.

As the sounds caught his ear, Maldura felt as if there was one fiend less to tug at his heart; but the relief was transient, for another minute brought their echoes to his brain, hurrying him back in memory to his first meeting with Fialto—then from place to thought—from thought to word, and plot, and action—through their whole horrible meanderings, to his present hell. His agony now became choking, and, grasping his throat as though he would tear it open, he thought he would give the world for a groan; but even that was denied him, and he fell on the floor without uttering a sound.

Thus ended this compact of sin. It could not have ended otherwise; for there is no sympathy in evil, whose natural consequence is hatred. Yet the evil may not hate themselves; if they do not, however, 'tis only because of that instinctive sophistry with which the mind is ever ready to defend itself from whatever is painful; but the delusion is limited to themselves; for the vices of others they

have a clear-sightedness which even the minutest deformities cannot escape. Indeed, evil is but another name for moral discord; its law, revulsion; and its final issue the shutting up the soul in impenetrable solitude.

CHAPTER XVI.

When Antonio, with his fellow-servants, entered his mistress's apartment and saw her weltering in blood, and stretched, apparently, lifeless on the floor, he was too much shocked at the part he had borne in her catastrophe to wait for a second look, but, concluding her dead, availed himself of the general confusion to slip away and convey the intelligence to his employer. The consternation of the other domestics may easily be imagined; but, fortunately, there was one amongst them, an aged housekeeper, who on removing the body, and perceiving it still warm, had the presence of mind to send for a surgeon. In the meantime Rosalia was put into a warm bed, and such other restoratives being applied as are usual in similar cases, she soon began to show symptoms of life. Immediately after, the surgeon arrived. "One minute more,"

said he, "and I should have been too late." He then proceeded to probe the wound, when, drawing a long sigh, Rosalia opened her eyes. On further examination, the surgeon pronounced her wound a flesh one; but she had suffered so much from loss of blood, he observed, that nothing but the utmost care and absence of all excitement, could possibly save her. He then ordered the room to be cleared, and enjoined that on no account she should be allowed to speak. This last injunction became necessary in consequence of several ineffectual attempts she had made to inquire after her husband. The surgeon further added, on catching the word husband, and connecting it with certain surmises which had been hinted to him of Monaldi's concern in the affair, that he would recommend it to her not to see any one—"not excepting even her husband." Rosalia answered with an imploring look, but the surgeon observing, that her life depended on her obedience in this particular, she was obliged to acquiesce. For the same reason the interdiction was also extended to her father. It was with great difficulty, however, that Landi could be prevailed on to forego seeing his daughter; but the surgeon was peremptory, and he was forced to obey. It was

fortunate for Rosalia that the knowledge of her husband's absence was thus kept from her; Monaldi having disappeared, and gone no one knew whither; as to his insanity, the few incoherent words he had uttered previous to her fainting, had either passed from her mind, or considered merely as the effect of violent emotion, were little heeded.

We left Maldura in a state of misery only to be conceived by the guilty, or by those to whom a holy abhorrence of sin reveals its frightful nature. It was in vain he summoned the casuistry which had hitherto supported him in the contemplation of crime. It came now as formerly, and with a sound of might, but it spent itself like the wind against a solid rock; for he had now to do, not with hypothesis, but a based reality, darkening the present, and stretching its long shadow into the future. Before the accomplishment of his purpose his life had seemed a burden, and he would have welcomed death as a release from trouble; but now, though the burden was heavier and more galling, the thought of death only filled him with dismay, and he shrank from it as the traveller shrinks from an abyss whose edge his foot feels in the dark, but

whose depth neither his eye nor his imagination can fathom.

Thus will the sense of guilt sometimes cow the proudest philosophy. The atheist may speculate, and go on speculating till he is brought up by annihilation; he may then return to life, and reason away the difference between good and evil; he may even go further, and imagine to himself the perpetration of the most atrocious acts; and still he may eat his bread with relish, and sleep soundly in his bed; for his sins wanting, as it were, substance, having no actual solidity to leave their traces in his memory, all future retribution may seem to him a thing with which, in any case, he can have no concern; but let him once turn his theory to practice—let him make crime palpable—in an instant he feels its hot impress on his soul. Then it is, that what may happen beyond the grave becomes no matter of indifference; and though his *reason* may seem to have proved that death is a final end, then comes the question: what does his reason *know* of death? Then, last of all, the little word *if*, swelling to a fearful size, and standing at the outlet of his theories, like a relentless giant, ready to demolish his conclusions.

But Maldura's sufferings were now to be suspended, for the report of Rosalia's recovery at last reached him. This unlooked-for intelligence was followed by a spasm of joy scarcely to have been exceeded had he been suddenly reprieved from an ignominious death. He felt like one emerging from the hopeless darkness of a dungeon to the light and free air of day; and though the hope which had once sustained him was gone for ever, and he had nothing to look to, he yet began to fancy, and even to feel, without stopping to ask why, that his former relish of life was now returning. But his respite was short. It was natural that release from a great, though only imagined, evil should render him for a time less sensible to such as were minor and actual; but they were light only from comparison, and no sooner did the weight of the former begin to pass from his memory, than the pressure of the latter became more perceptible, till at last, in spite of every effort to resist them, they became the subjects of his daily and hourly contemplation.

Amongst these, the sorest, and that which time rather added to than diminished, was the destruction of Monaldi's peace, perhaps of his life; for Monaldi had never been heard of since the fatal

night, and whither he had gone, or what had become of him, was still uncertain.

Whilst Maldura believed himself injured, and the victim of the world's injustice, he gave himself up to a moody sullenness, either shut up at home, or brooding in darkness in the solitude of ruins. But now that his sufferings were occasioned by his own crimes, their effect was different. He became restless; deserting his former haunts, and mixing with the world; visiting every place of public amusement, giving entertainments, and forming new acquaintance; then, tiring of these, he would change his abode, engage in new diversions, and collect new associates; then he would remove to another, then run the same round, till that was exhausted; then to another, then from city to city, from village to village, wandering and journeying, day and night, and seeking and catching at every kind of object, however insignificant, that might, if possible, draw his thoughts from himself: and such is the last object of guilt; for novelty while pursued is the world's substitute for hope; when possessed, its opiate for remorse — the opiate indeed of a moment—yet for that moment will the guilty toil more intently and desperately than in their days of innocence for the promise of heaven.

It was in one of these wanderings that Maldura, returning towards Naples, in company with a party of pleasure, was separated from his companions by a circumstance of no uncommon occurrence.

The day had begun sultry, but was now closing, after a refreshing shower, with one of those delicious atmospheres known only in the south: so sweet! so bright!—as if the common air had suddenly given place to the humid sighs of answering orange groves and the intermingled breath of enamoured flowers—as if the dripping trees and fields had actually been flooded by liquid gold from the sun; then the hum of insects, the twittering of birds, and the ceaseless darting of innumerable lizards, so filling the ear and eye with sound and motion, as if the very ground and air were exulting in life! Such a scene was not for Maldura, and trusting to his horse to follow in the track of his companions, he had closed his eyes, when, reaching the brow of a hill, a general exclamation from the company made him look up. "Glorious! magnificent!" now burst from one and another. It was the Bay of Naples; a scene not to be painted by words—even though its waters were likened to a sea of sapphire, its mountains to amethysts, and its skirt-

ing city to a fillet of snow; these, indeed, might give their colour, but not the harmony of lines, nor the light and shadow, nor the dazzling expanse —and never the living, conscious joy with which they seemed to send up their shout of praise to the immeasurable depths above. There is a voice in nature ever audible to the heart—which no hardness can shut out—and for its weal or woe, as the heart may be. Maldura heard it now—breaking upon him like a clap of thunder. He instinctively turned from the scene, and looked towards Vesuvius. But even from that he shrank; for the terrible Vesuvius was now smiling in purple, and reposing beneath his pillar of smoke as under a gorgeous canopy: the very type of himself—gay and peaceful without, yet restless and racked with fire within. A groan was rising to his lips, but a resolute effort enabled him to suppress it; yet dreading to trust himself any longer to the observation of his party, he hastily dismounted, under pretence of deciphering a half-effaced inscription on the road, and bade them ride on.

His companions being now out of sight, Maldura was about to remount, when the girth of his saddle gave way. This accident made it necessary for

him to seek assistance, and he was proceeding for this purpose to a village a little off the road, when he thought he descried through the trees something peeping above the ruins of an ancient tomb like the roof of a hut. As he approached he perceived it to be the shed of a half-demolished hovel; but thinking it might possibly still afford shelter to some wandering swine-herd, he fastened his horse to the branch of a wild fig-tree that grew out of a crevice in the ruin, and walking round had just come to the side of the hut, when he heard a low murmuring sound as of voices within. He stopped a moment, doubting if it were safe to enter; should he encounter robbers, the odds would be against him. Whatever the sounds might proceed from, he thought it at least but prudent to reconnoitre, and observing a rent in the wall he looked through it; but he could only perceive a dark heap lying in a corner, and something like a human leg thrust from beneath it. Being satisfied that he had nothing to fear, Maldura entered. On a nearer view the heap in the corner proved, as he had conjectured, to be a man asleep. "Ho! fellow!" said he, "awake —I need your assistance." With a languid motion the figure turned upon his back, and slowly draw-

ing down the dark and tattered mantle, that enveloped his head and body, a little below the eyes, appeared to look up. Maldura, catching a glimpse of his ashy forehead, as it gleamed through the flakes of his long black hair, bent forward to see if the man were awake; but his eyes were so dark and sunken that he could only discern two bright specks. "Come, rouse thee, fellow," said he, impatiently, "I want your aid." The man made an effort to rise, and the garment fell from his face. "Monaldi!" exclaimed Maldura, recoiling with horror.

"Who calls me?" said the other. "What do you want?—oh, you are a *sbirro*. But you come too late—I am dead—ha! ha! You cannot touch me now!"

"Fiend, devil that I am!" groaned Maldura. "His wits are gone—and I—open—gape, hell, and swallow me!"

"Go, go," said the maniac.

"I will, I will," cried Maldura, "and rid you of a monster!" So saying, he rushed from the hovel, when, stumbling over a loose stone, he fell to the ground. He sprang upon his feet again, but the accident had given a moment for reflection.

"No!" he said, while a multitude of thoughts passed with the rapidity of lightning through his brain. "No—I will still endure the torturing sight—though it transform me to the like—and endure it, if possible, to save him."

This resolution calmed him in an instant; but it was not till after a considerable time that he could summon sufficient fortitude to return to the hut. When he did so he found Monaldi again covered and seemingly asleep. On lifting the mantle, however, he perceived that he was still awake—but so exhausted, either by disease or famine, that he could no longer move.

As Maldura beheld the ravages which misery had so rapidly made on his late happy friend, and gazed upon the livid remains of his noble countenance, the gaunt and angular outline of his once graceful form, he felt that he had need of all his courage to hold to his resolution.

"Horrible!" said he, turning away with a suffocating feeling. "But this is no time even for remorse—he must not lie here." Then hastily quitting the hut, and, vaulting on the bare back of his horse, he set off at full speed for the village.

It was now the first time since Maldura left

Florence that anything like a feeling of self-approbation had even glanced on his heart; for now, in spite of his remorse, the consciousness of performing a duty forced a passage to his breast; and feeble as this was—even as the thread of life that ravels its way through hundreds of fathoms of darkness to the half quenched eye of the condemned miner—it yet seemed to cheer his heart almost with hope.

Having ordered such accommodations as the village post-house afforded, Maldura returned with assistance to the hovel, and soon saw his wretched friend comfortably lodged.

A messenger was then despatched for a physician, but, there being none nearer than Naples, it was near midnight before he arrived. The apparently exhausted maniac had, in the meantime, through the mistaken indulgence of his attendants, been suffered to gorge himself with food. This brought on a lethargy, then suffocation and spasms, ending in a frightful paroxysm of raving; in the height of which the physician entered.

The agony of Maldura during this scene had become almost insupportable; but when the physician observed that the injudicious treatment of the

patient was the probable cause of his frenzy, and gave hope of his recovery, he dropped senseless. He had borne misery, as we have seen, and almost despair, with a degree of firmness; but the transition of the latter to hope, even feeble as it was, proved too much for him. As he had, however, only fainted, he was soon revived, when, observing that he still appeared to be much weakened, the doctor advised his going immediately to bed.

"No," said Maldura—"I must remain where I am, though the sounds I hear rive me like fire from heaven."

"Alack!" said the hostess, who was then bathing his temples, "he has caught the other's madness."

"No, woman!" replied Maldura with a ghastly smile, "mine is from hell."

"My good sir," said the physician, "this is no place for one in your state—you must to bed."

"Look at him," continued Maldura, turning towards Monaldi, and without regarding the speaker—"look at that human ruin."

The maniac now, attempting to rise, appeared first to discover that he was bound. For a moment he endeavoured to free himself with a kind of

childish impatience, but finding himself baffled, he sent forth a cry so shrill and piteous that the attendants involuntarily put their hands to their ears.

"Nay, hear it," said Maldura, who alone seemed to listen unmoved, but whom the sound had smote deeper; "hear it—'tis the crash of a wrecked mind—yet even that—even him I envy—For what is his state to mine? No—the world cannot see the hell from which my spirit looks—nor know the longing with which it strains over the gulf between us. Bid me not leave him, in the fear that suffering like his can injure *me*."

Thus did the pride of Maldura, stony and colossal as it seemed, fall before the voice of conscience, even as the walls of Jericho before the horn of Joshua.

But the triumph of conscience was not yet complete. Though his presumption was gone, and he no longer sought to resist or evade the sense of his crime, he could not wholly subdue a worldly feeling of shame at the thought of appearing despicable in the eyes of others. He had therefore no sooner given vent to this burst of remorse, and perceived its effect on the astonished hearers, than he felt as if he could have sunk into the earth.

"Poor gentleman!" said the landlady, crossing herself with a mixture of fear and compassion—"he seems to have some terrible sin on his mind."

"Peace, woman!" said Maldura, "leave the room."

"San' Gennaro protect us!" muttered the hostess. "I can at least take a good conscience away with me—which is more than I shall leave here."

Whatever the physician may have thought, he was prudent enough to keep it to himself; he however again urged Maldura to retire; but, finding him still obstinate, he left his patient in his charge, promising to repeat his visit at an early hour the next day.

This was the first penance to which Maldura had ever brought himself to submit. And never did desperate contrition encounter a greater. For, taking his station at the foot of the bed, and keeping his eyes fixed on Monaldi, he scarcely moved during the whole night; and, though every sound and look seemed to go through him, he still continued to stand listening and gazing, hour after hour, till the wretched maniac, exhausted by raving and the violence of the fever, sunk at last to sleep.

The day was already far advanced before the physician arrived. "Your friend," said he, turning to Maldura, "if I mistake not, will awake in his senses: it may be, only to know that he is dying; yet, as it is possible he may recover, we will hope for the best. All depends on the strength of his constitution, and his being kept quiet."

Maldura attempted to speak—"My dear sir," continued the doctor, perceiving his emotion, "I will not ask if you wish the recovery of your friend; but, if you do, you must remain here no longer. His crisis is at hand, and I dare not answer for the issue should either your presence, or any other cause, produce the least agitation. 'Tis not for your sake, but his—" "No more," said Maldura. "You shall be obeyed. But when—" "You may see him in a few days," interrupted the physician.

CHAPTER XVII.

When Monaldi awoke the next morning, his reason was returned; but he was so feeble that his attendants could only perceive it in the change of his countenance. The sympathy in such a transition is not confined to friends or relatives; for there is no species of calamity more universally touching than madness, and no joy more general than that which follows the restoration of reason. Though surrounded by strangers, no sooner did Monaldi open his eyes and begin to speak through them like an intelligent being, than, with the exception of his, there was not a dry eye seen in the room; and when he at last spoke, and inquired where he was, their joy became so tumultuous that the physician was obliged to order them away.

This is but one instance of the many anomalies

of human nature; for amongst all these whose humane sympathy was here excited, there was scarcely one, perhaps, who might not, in other circumstances, have easily been tempted to cheat, or slander, or betray the very object of their present compassion.

Whether this feeling be called virtuous, or not, it is not to be relied on as any evidence of goodness. There is nothing indeed deserving the name that is not equally so under all circumstances; an integrity which principle alone can ensure; the true proof of which is where, opposed to our interest, it triumphs over self. And yet this incidental virtue has its use, nay, it seems to be a common providential tax, that not even the bad should escape adding something, however small, to the general stock of happiness; for even the most selfish must be limited in his conflicts, and find thousands about him to whom he may be kind and compassionate without the cost even of a calculation; the world would else be at a stand, and the mass of men locked up in individual jealousies amidst the universal barter of benefits.

When, at length, the physician had pronounced Monaldi out of danger, and he had so far recovered

as to sit up and converse without difficulty, Maldura ventured to enter his chamber.

"Is it you, Doctor?" said Monaldi, for the dim light of the room prevented his seeing distinctly.

"No," replied Maldura; "the doctor is in Naples, and will not return before to-morrow."

"Sure I should know those tones," said Monaldi, reaching forward, "and yet it cannot be. Who is it then?" Maldura then drew nearer. "Blessed Heaven! Maldura! But, speak—is it indeed my friend? or does this uncertain light mock me?"

"You are not deceived," said Maldura: "'tis even he whom you once—— It *is* Maldura."

"It is indeed!" said Monaldi, as soon as his emotion allowed him utterance. "My best, my earliest friend! But how came you here? Yet I need not ask; for the kindness of Maldura's heart would have traced me."

Maldura turned away and covered his face in agony; for he had now to taste the bitter draught of praise unmerited — of praise made still more bitter in coming from the unsuspecting victim of his own villany.

"Nay, do not weep," said Monaldi, mistaking the cause of his emotion. "I seem, it is true, a

sorry spectacle, but that is nothing: I have been snatched from death—and more—I am restored with reason. Do not weep then, but rather rejoice, and aid me in giving thanks to that merciful Being who has still spared me guilty as I am."

Maldura, making an effort to collect himself, again took the hand of his friend. "Monaldi," said he, "I would pray with thee, but——"

"You believe *not?*" said Monaldi mournfully. "Alas, I had hoped that your early opinions had passed away with the vain-glory of youth."

"You mistake me," replied Maldura, "I thought not to deny your request, but only to defer for awhile——"

"But why?" interrupted Monaldi. "Is not praise due for signal mercy?"

"Because you know not yet the full measure of that mercy."

"What mean you?" cried Monaldi, starting up in the bed. "Is there—can there be—alas! no! the world is nothing now to me. Yet I will not repine; for this is mercy—oh, how far beyond my deserts!—that I am still permitted, though with a life of sorrow, even *here* to atone for that accursed deed. But I speak perhaps of what to you is a

mystery." Maldura was silent, for he knew not how to reply. "It must be so," continued Monaldi, "else you would not be here."

"Not so," answered Maldura.

"You know it then?"

"But too well."

"And yet, because your friend—you come to comfort a murderer. So pure yourself, yet so compassionate of guilt! There is but one Maldura."

Maldura only replied with a groan. "Would," he thought, "there were never one!"

"But no," added Monaldi; "I do injustice to your principles. You come to call him to repentance."

"No—*you* need not—at least in the degree."

"Say not so," cried Monaldi; "you know not the damning nature of my crime. The guilt of blood is on me—that were enough—but that blood too was *innocent*. Yet, dreadful as is this aggravation, still do I bless Heaven that I was permitted to know it ere we parted. No, Maldura, deeply as it sinks me in misery, I would not exchange this blissful conviction, wrought as it was in agony and blood, and breathed into my soul by

her dying lips—for all the joys (might even my spirit taste them) which the whole world could give."

"Thank Heaven!" thought Maldura, "he believes her innocent. He has now only to bear the shock of joy."

"Doubt you then," continued Monaldi, "that I need repentance?"

"I do not doubt—though I repeat my words."

"I cannot understand you."

"Nor will you until you know—but I wander from my purpose."

"What purpose?"

"You shall hear. But have you courage? Do you think you could bear—"

"What?"

"The fulness of joy."

"Oh, torture me not," said Monaldi, grasping his hand with violence. "A dream of hope has come to me—speak quickly—for I fear that I could not survive its vanishing."

"Then, live," said Maldura, "for your wife—"

"Speak!" said Monaldi, with a piercing scream.

"She lives!" said Maldura.

Monaldi, losing his hold, fell back speechless on

the bed. Maldura instantly sprang to his assistance; but he had not fainted. "Heaven be praised!" said Maldura, "at least one mountain is off my soul."

For a long time Monaldi lay without word or motion; at length, drawing a deep sigh, he gently clasped his hands, and raising his eyes upwards, seemed to be engaged in prayer. His wretched companion knelt beside the bed, and bending over it, continued in that posture till, overwhelmed by the sense of guilt, he sunk exhausted on the floor. This was the first prayer that Maldura had uttered since his days of childhood; and the consciousness that it was so, carried his thoughts back over a dreary and long-forgotten waste of years; no wonder then, that he sank appalled, when, at every step, some buried sin, now rising up before him, added to the long array, like an army of spectres.

"My friend," said Monaldi, reaching out his hand, "come near me. My strength has returned."

"Blessed be God!" said Maldura, "if that *I* might say so."

Monaldi, pressing his hand, made a sign to him

to sit by the bed. "I am strong enough," said he, "to hear the particulars. How was it? how did she survive the blow? I thought I saw her die —but my reason was gone."

Maldura then related in a few words what he had gathered from report; and concluded by telling him that he had already written to Rosalia and her father to acquaint them with his situation, and that he had since despatched another messenger with the tidings of his recovery.

"And yet her ashy cheek—the leaden eye, which has so long haunted me," said Monaldi, "were they not real? Speak to me, Maldura—for this strange place—all I have heard, seem so like a dream."

"'Tis all real," answered Maldura.

"Mysterious Providence, how dost thou watch over and baffle the sinner for his good! And you saw her?"

"No. I said not that I saw her—"

"Nay, then," interrupted Monaldi, with a distrustful look.

"But I had the account from your family surgeon. I think his name is Vannini."

"'Tis true then!" cried Monaldi, "the whole

world would not make me doubt it now. Bless him! Oh, Maldura—" He stopped, for the fulness of his joy verged to pain, for a minute almost to agony, when a flood of tears relieved him.

"Devil!" thought Maldura, "and I would have broken this heart."

"Give me your hand," said Monaldi. "Yes, 'tis real."

The touch shot maddening to Maldura's brain. He withdrew his hand and covered his face.

"What is the matter—are you ill?" asked Monaldi.

"Think not of me," said Maldura. "I would have but one thought—of yourself."

"So like you! yourself ever last. Then be it so. You tell me that my poor wife was soon recovered. Did she—yes, she forgave me—she must have inquired after me."

"You were sought after through every town and village. Even now I believe the search is continued."

"Thank Heaven! she was spared *that* shock. Had she discovered me at one time—Oh, my friend, you know not what I have suffered."

"But too well," thought Maldura. "And yet,"

he added aloud, as if willing to take from the load on his conscience, "the loss of reason must have blunted you too much."

"You say right. What I endured at that time I know not; 'tis now but a dark dream to my memory. But this is not my first return to reason. I had a lucid interval of many days—such days! No, your innocent heart cannot even shadow them —*you* have not felt remorse."

"I must bear it," said Maldura to himself. "Then let it come—all! Go on."

"When I came to myself I awoke, as I thought, with a sensation of extreme cold. I was lying on the snow, on one of the desolate ridges of the Apennines. How I came there I knew not—and I thought I was dreaming; but I soon found that I had recovered from madness. I shuddered. Yet my recollections of it were dim and shadowy, and they passed away. Not so what followed—the remembrance of the night which sent me forth a maniac; my poor wife—murdered, and innocent —yet forgiving her murderer. This was the misery, Maldura. I had taken vengeance upon me, when I should have forgiven even my deadliest enemy. I was a murderer of one who loved me!

No—you must first know remorse to know what I have gone through. But I will not recall it."

"Nay, on—I would know *all*," said Maldura, whose self-abhorrence now became greedy of penance.

"Perhaps you are right," answered Monaldi. "'Tis wholesome for the mind to look on past suffering—and most so when happy. And I—'tis hardly painful to recall it now. But one instance is enough. About sunrise one day I found myself standing on the edge of a precipice; I looked down, and saw, some hundred feet below me, and rising from out a bed of mist, a multitude of jagged rocks. On the peak of one of them I perceived something white; I drew nearer, and found it to be the skeleton of a mule. The surest foot, thought I, may stumble at last! It seemed a type of myself. As the mist cleared away, I looked again, and a little lower down I descried the bones and tattered garments of a man. The skull had fallen from the body, and lay grinning upward as if in mockery of my horror. Presently it appeared to move; a moment after, a small snake wound itself out of one of the eye-holes. At another time this would have made me shudder; but I now

caught at it with a perverse avidity: it seemed to call up the living man before me. I saw him with all his innumerable nerves, and those sensitive messengers speeding with the abhorred touch of the reptile to his brain. I saw his hair bristling with terror, and heard his cry echo among the rocks. I then thought of his form in death, now blanched and mottled with weather-stains, impenetrable to injury, though man and beast were leagued against it, though the mountain I stood on should topple down and grind it to powder. A horrid feeling of envy gushed from my heart. I called it happy, and hung over it with a kind of furious longing—gazing, and gazing—till, methought, something—I know not what—seemed to force me from the precipice, and I fell on my knees. It was the first time I had dared to do so."

"'Twas for *me* to have envied it!" said Maldura, thinking unconsciously aloud.

"You!" exclaimed Monaldi.

"Go on," said Maldura.

"I know not how long I continued in prayer," resumed Monaldi, "but when I arose my despair was gone; my remorse was now changed to repentance. Then followed hope—such hope—oh,

my friend, as only the broken heart can know when the healing comes from Heaven."

"But such as mine," said Maldura, in a half-smothered voice—his heart failed him, and he stopped.

Monaldi continued. "How my reason again wandered— But I see it distresses you. We will leave the past then, and talk of the future—or rather of the present. But why do you shake so, and look so pale? Nay, forgive me that I have asked such a question—as if you could hear my tale unmoved. Oh, Maldura, you have the heart of a child."

"This is too much," said Maldura, moving away from the bed.

"Nay," said Monaldi, "do not think of my sufferings; they are past. Think only of my present happiness; for I know not the mortal with whom I would now exchange lots. Come, my friend, dwell no more on the past, but think of the world I possess. For is not that a world, beyond which the heart has no craving? And what more could I ask, with such a wife, and such a friend?"

"You never *had* a friend," said Maldura.

"Never had!" repeated Monaldi, with a feeling rather of perplexity than astonishment. "Maldura, why do you talk so wildly?"

Maldura made no reply, but, returning to the bed, drew a chair near it. His eyes were bent downward, and he seemed inwardly struggling with some violent emotion. "'Tis done!" he said at last, while a flush of gloomy satisfaction passed over his brow: "the proud neck bends to the yoke."

"Whose neck?" asked Monaldi.

"Monaldi," said Maldura, without heeding the question, "you said you believed your wife innocent. On what was your faith founded?"

"On her own words."

"On nothing more?"

The faint colour, which the excitement of the moment had brought to Monaldi's cheek, now suddenly gave place to a corpse-like whiteness.

"'Tis even as I thought," said Maldura to himself; "another fiend might rekindle his suspicions with a breath." And he repeated the question.

"Wherefore do you ask?" said Monaldi.

"You shall know. But answer me. Had you no other ground of faith?"

"They were her dying words — at least so thought she as well as I. I needed no more."

"And would they serve you, think you, as a lasting panoply? And you—would no insinuation, no future circumstance touch you with doubt?"

"I think—nay, I *know* they would not. Yet why—oh, do not torture me—but if you know aught—speak at once."

"You have said enough," replied Maldura, "to determine my course. You would not again murder, for your heart is changed; but for the rest—Monaldi, you need more than your wife's words; and you shall have it. You *believe*—but *I know* her to be innocent."

"You!"

"You shall have proof which you cannot doubt. Listen—You first saw Fialto in your gateway?"

"Fialto! How know you—"

"No matter. Answer me."

"I did so."

"You saw him then almost daily in Romero's shop, or sauntering by your house; looking up at your windows, and always seeming confused when detected. Next you met him at the theatre—then, as you were returning home, near your house."

Monaldi listened with amazement. "Good heaven! you could have learnt these particulars only from the wretch himself."

"You will know how I came by them. Had not you a servant called Antonio?"

"Yes."

"He was a creature of Fialto's. Through him his employer became apprised of all your movements—your visit to the theatre—your projected journey to Genezzano; this last intelligence suggested the letter, which was put into your hand, as if by mistake. You were addressed as Giuseppe—"

"Monstrous!"

"Ay—there are devils that walk the earth even now. But listen. Then followed the last damning proof. The effect of the letter was anticipated—it needed but little knowledge of man to have done it—your suppressing it; your feigned journey; your return. Accordingly Fialto was prepared to meet you, the wretch Antonio having admitted and secreted him at an early hour in your dressing-room."

"Enough," cried Monaldi; "I need no more."

"Nay, I must through. Your approach was

then announced by a preconcerted signal from one who had dogged you from Rome and back. Soon after, your step being heard on the stairs, Fialto stole forth from the closet; you were at the door; he sprang towards the bed, and seized your sleeping wife."

"Merciful heaven! that human malice should have so pursued me!"

"Was it not a web worthy of fiends?"

"Horrible!"

"You had been unlike man to have broken through it."

"The frightful scene still makes me shudder. But, tell me—what was the motive for this cruel villany?"

"Revenge."

"Revenge!—for what? I had never injured him. I knew not even the name of Fialto till we met in the theatre."

"Think not of *him;* he was but the instrument —and a fit one too, for his name alone were enough to blast the peace of any house he might enter. What he did was for that with which hell is paved—for gold."

"Of whom speak you then?"

"Of the devil that employed him—to whose black and envious soul the libertine Fialto's seems almost bright; of one who hated you."

"Hated me! I have never harmed living creature, knowingly."

"Know you not then that virtue, genius, success, are all, to the evil mind, causes of hatred? You doubt it. Oh, the pure in heart are slow of faith in evil. But you shall have proof—living proof. Do not interrupt me. There was a time when you, Monaldi, were but one of the multitude. You may recall it if you look back to your days of boyhood—to the school at Bologna. You were then deemed one of little promise—next to nothing. No doubt your quiet and retired habits led to the opinion; but so it was—and the opinion was general. You may remember too the reputation which *I* then held; your own estimation of my talents; that of our masters; of the whole school. I stood alone—the first—without a rival. Could there have been a greater contrast? No. The general voice had placed us at opposite extremes: and I thought it just. Yet, because of your praise, I

courted your acquaintance. Your confiding heart readily opened to receive me, and—in an evil hour, you called me—*friend*."

"Stop!" cried Monaldi, convulsively grasping Maldura's arm; for a suspicion of the truth now flashed upon him, and his horror became intolerable.

"'T will soon be over," replied Maldura.

"I cannot hear it," said Monaldi—"I must not."

"I must on," answered Maldura; "for the finger of Power is upon me—and I cannot choose but speak." Then, averting his face and looking from Monaldi, he continued with increasing rapidity. "Elated with praise, full—nay, drunk with hope—and sure of fulfilling every early prediction—I began my career. But I will not go over the horrible ground—at every step I sunk—lower and lower—till—yes, I must speak it—till my very name was blurred with the common mass. What followed then? Envy and loathing of all above me."

Monaldi groaned. "Impede me not," said Maldura, hurrying onward, "but listen. I now return to you. What was then your course?

From obscurity, neglect, almost from contempt; when no one even thought of, dreamt of such a being — with the suddenness of a meteor you burst upon the world. In a moment all eyes were upon you—every tongue, every heart was yours. How think you *I* heard, saw, felt all this?—how beheld this fame—this boon of the world, for which alone I had *coveted* life—snatched from my grasp, and lavished unmeasured on the very man with whom my proud spirit would have once disdained to contend? I cursed you from my heart."

Monaldi gasped for breath.

Maldura continued. "You can now understand my greeting when we first met in Rome—why, knowing your voice, I fled from the gate-way—why I rejected your daily kindnesses—why almost spurned your last generous proffer. But your fame was not all that haunted and goaded me; though I could not forgive, I should yet have endured it in silence. Your reputation was followed by another offence still deadlier to my pride: you supplanted me in my love. For in my days of hope I had loved your wife—had offered my hand—and been rejected. You afterwards saw and won her. *This* was the blow that felled me. The

news of your marriage passed through my heart like lightning, scathing every human feeling—and I swore by my misery that I would blast your happiness."

Monaldi's teeth chattered as with an ague: his hands were crossed upon his breast, his head sunk between his shoulders, and his whole body drawn up as if under the influence of terror; yet his eyes remained fastened on Maldura, as though a fearful charm made it impossible to withdraw them. But Maldura saw not—thought not of this effect of his disburthening conscience; his thoughts were on himself, and, his eyes turned from Monaldi to the opposite wall, he continued to speak like one impelled by the rack. "It was for this purpose I sought Fialto. 'Twas I—*I* was his employer. 'Twas *I* caused him to hang about your house—to waylay you from the theatre—to write the letter. Yes, it was *I*—" repeated Maldura, when, with a terrific shout, Monaldi leaped from the bed. "Avaunt, fiend!"

Maldura stood aghast.

"Back! back to hell!" vociferated Monaldi.

"Yes, I deserve it!" said Maldura,—"Hell is my place. Even now—"

"What's your name?"

"It is—can it be!" said Maldura—"Heaven forbid. Do you not know me! 'Tis I—Maldura."

"You Maldura!" cried the maniac, with a scornful laugh. Maldura's hair rose with horror. "Thou liest! Maldura was my friend—he was honest, righteous. He had no wings as thou hast. Avaunt, devil!"

"'Tis over!" said Maldura, clasping his hands in agony—"my measure is full—" and he rushed from the chamber.

CHAPTER XVIII.

"WHERE—which way? Show me to him," said Rosalia.

"Be patient, my child," said her father. "We must not be abrupt. So sudden a meeting might prove fatal. Let us wait till our good hostess has apprised them of our arrival."

"With all my heart," replied the landlady; "though, I should think, the better person for this office would be his friend, Signor Maldura."

"True," observed Landi. "But first, tell me—How is he?"

The landlady then related the particulars of Monaldi's illness, and was just concluding with an account of his entire recovery, when, pale and ghastly, Maldura entered.

"Horrible!" said Maldura, drawing back at the sight of Landi. "His wife too—Monster! now am I doubly cursed!"

"Speak! What's the matter?" exclaimed Rosalia and Landi, in the same breath.

"You will know but too soon," replied Maldura, retreating towards the door.

"For mercy's sake!" cried Rosalia. "Stop, tell—"

"Stay me not," said Maldura in a choking voice—"there's a curse about me." So saying, he dashed open the door, and ran with frantic swiftness from the house.

If it be hard to part with the dead, and to see one borne to the grave with whom we have been accustomed to associate all our wishes and schemes of happiness, and without whom nothing in life seems capable of imparting enjoyment, there is yet a consolation in the thought that our grief is only for our own suffering, since it cannot reach one to whom our loss is a gain. What then must it be to feel this entire avulsion from the living; to know that the object with whom our very soul was mixed, and who is thus parted from our common

being, still walks the same earth, breathes the same air, and wears the same form; yet lives, as to us, as if dead—closed, sealed up from all our thoughts and sympathies, like to a statue of adamant. What must it be to know too that this second self, though callous and impenetrable from without, is yet within all sense? The partial palsy-death of the body is but a faint image of this half-death of the twin-being wife and husband. And Rosalia soon felt it in all its agony.

The alarm occasioned by this last scene was so sudden that neither father nor daughter thought more of first making known their arrival, but, following the landlady, entered Monaldi's chamber. He was sitting on the bed, his hands clenched on his knees, and his eyes fixed on vacancy. Rosalia sprang forward, but at the sight of his countenance she shrunk back and stood gazing on him in silence. And next to madness was the dreadful conviction within her. She would have folded him in her arms; but the thought of the touch of the benumbed, vacant being before her sickened her, and she sunk back in her father's arms. But she had not fainted: the energy of hope that he might

again recover, came like a ministering spirit, and nerved her for the occasion.

"You must go with me," said Landi.

"No," replied Rosalia, in a low, but firm, voice; "I am *his* even in madness. Do not fear for me; the shock is now over. But speak to him." Landi then advancing spoke to him by name; but Monaldi making no answer, he drew nearer and took his hand. For a moment Monaldi turned to look at him, then withdrawing his eyes as if with terror—"Away! away!" he cried. "Why come you again? thou liest—Maldura did not do it—'twas I murdered her. Look—look at her—'twas I—she was my wife—she'll confess it herself. But no, she cannot—she's dead."

"No, she lives—she is still yours!" cried Rosalia, going to him.

"Ha! there are two!" cried the maniac with a frightful shriek. "Take them away—I did not murder both."

The father and daughter stood silent and motionless; their very breath seemed suspended; and for several minutes not a sound was heard but the quick, low panting of the affrighted maniac. Landi, alarmed for the reason of his daughter, drew her

into another room, when she fell on his neck and wept. But we close the scene; for we cannot describe that which no tears relieved—even that blessed dew, which, in most other cases, softens agony.

CHAPTER XIX.

LITTLE now remains to be told of the unfortunate Monaldi. He was taken home by his friends, and every means used to restore his reason, but without effect. He would remain for days together fixed in one spot, with his eyes bent on the ground, and without speaking, or appearing conscious of what was passing about him. Whilst in this state nothing could rouse him but the voice of his wife, which never failed to bring on a paroxysm of raving, when he would sometimes fancy himself Fialto, then Maldura, but more often that he was one among the dead, and that Rosalia had come to upbraid him ; for he had in some way or other connected her image with a spirit.

This was a bitter aggravation to Rosalia's wretchedness, since, by forcing her to avoid him, it deprived her of her last melancholy pleasure,

that of administering to his comforts. Her struggle was long and severe before she could bring herself to quit him; she at last, however, consented to remove to her father's. But nothing could prevail with her to forbear visiting the house, where she would often pass entire days, sometimes sitting in an adjoining room, and listening to his footsteps, or wandering to and fro, and hanging with fondness over every spot and object with which she could associate his slightest word or look. Oh, woman, when thy heart is pure, and thy love true, what is there in nature to match thee! Though he whom thou lovest become maimed, wasted by disease, or blanked by madness, yet wilt thou cling to him, and see in the ruin only that image which he first left in thy heart.

It was after one of the longest of these paroxysms, that Monaldi was one day seen to go into his painting-room. This unusual circumstance was immediately caught at as a symptom of returning reason; and the hopes of his friends were raised on finding, a few days after, that he was at work on a picture. But his impenetrable silence, and the deep gloom which still hung about him, soon showed that, if he had recovered at all, it was only

in part; for though his look was no longer vacant, nor his actions without purpose, he yet moved and looked as if he noticed nothing. What he was employed on no one knew, for without speaking, he once discovered so much distress at the intrusion of a servant, that no one after dared enter his room. In this mood did Monaldi pass month after month, regularly shut up, and occupied as if in his perfect senses. At length, after a fit of weeping, that seemed to fill the whole house with wailing, he one day came out of his room, and desired that his father-in-law might be sent for. Though the order was rational, there was still something so frightful in his expression that the servants at first all drew back; nor was it till they recollected its coherence that any one prepared to obey him.

With a beating heart, and eyes lighted up with hope, Landi instantly followed the messenger. Monaldi met him at the door.

"You know me, then?" said the Advocate.

Monaldi spoke not a word, but led him in silence to his painting-room.

He watched Landi's countenance. "You feel it?" said he, "though only a picture — *I* have

known the original. What is there I have *seen*." As he said this, his lips quivered and his knees smote each other.

Monaldi's insanity could no longer be doubted, and Landi turned from the picture with a hopeless sigh.

"Nay, speak not," said Monaldi, thinking he was about to reply: "my time is measured; for my work on earth is done—and I must burthen it no longer. Landi—thou art reputed wise. Yes, amongst the living thou art so. But what is thy wisdom with the dead? Folly! Your earthly philosophy teaches that the Prince of evil is hideous. And you think to serve the world by it. Miserable folly! Men flee from what is frightful. So would they from sin, did it take the shape you have given it. But *I*—I have seen it, face to face—enthroned in the majesty of hell. Look! That is the form in which he whom men call Satan appears to the living. Ay, 'tis with that deadly beauty he wins your souls. But the *evil mind*, which you now see mixed with it, transpires not on earth, when he tempts you; 'tis only in hell that his victims behold, and hate it—when too

late. Look to it then, you of earth—you, to whom I leave this warning—look to it."

The wild mixture of reason and madness in this speech, and the extraordinary work before him, so confounded Landi, that it was several minutes before he became sufficiently collected to perceive that Monaldi had disappeared. His last words then occurred to him, and though obscure, he yet understood enough to be alarmed, and set off immediately in search of him. But in vain.

From that day nothing was heard of Monaldi till more than a year after, when he was accidentally discovered at the cottage of a lone woman among the mountains of Abruzzo; but as neither menace nor entreaty could prevail on him to return home, his friends were compelled to humour him, and to content themselves with making his situation as comfortable as the nature of his abode admitted.

Of Rosalia [continues the manuscript] little more need be said. Her affliction is still unabated; for time, which wears away all grief for the dead, has no power with her who is at once both wife and widow. Monaldi is never out of her thoughts;

and, her only consolation being that of feeling herself near him, she has become a boarder at a convent in his neighbourhood.

Maldura's fate may be told in a few words. He became a brother of this convent soon after his last interview with Monaldi, and died about two years ago; if not lamented, at least pitied for his sufferings, and respected for his penitence. It was at his instance that the picture just mentioned was procured for the convent. He wished to have it near him, he said, that he might never forget what a mind he had blasted.

So died Maldura; from whose miserable life may be learned this useful lesson: that without virtue, the love of praise is a curse; that distinction is the consequence—not the object, of a great mind; that it cannot be made so without the desire of supplanting; and that envy, jealousy, or any similar feeling—whatever the pursuit—may always be regarded by those who have them, as sure warnings that the true love of excellence is not in them—without which nothing great and permanent ever was produced.

The career of his accomplice was sooner ended, and, if less painful, it was still less enviable; for,

though Fialto had always laid the unction of minor villany to his soul when he compared himself with Maldura, he was, for many reasons, of a character more hopeless. If ambition hardens the heart, sensuality kills it. The natural and social feelings of the ambitious man, nay, also the conscience, may all indeed be lost in selfish insulation; yet there are causes which sometimes revive them—such as time, disappointment, or even the attainment of his object—whether it be power or revenge; when they often react, as in Maldura's case, by repentance. But there is little hope of these in the course of the libertine; to whom failure supplies excitement, and success adds habit, which time only confirms: and it must be so; for it being the nature of his vices to identify the affections with the senses, the whole heart becomes animal, thence a pander to the body, till its baser functions are wasted; nor stopping even then, but in the restlessness of habit sending at last its prurient desires to the brain, and mocking the wretched remnant of the man to the very grave. The old age of a confirmed libertine is therefore seldom better than a loathsome *phantasmagoria* of a vicious youth. The Count Fialto was saved at least this

second childhood of sin. He had embarked, soon after quitting Rome, with the poor Nun and his ill-got wealth, on board a small vessel bound for Marseilles. The vessel was never more heard of; but the bodies of the Count and his companion were found by some fishermen, washed up, about three weeks after, on the island of Gorgona.

THE END OF THE MANUSCRIPT.

CONCLUSION

BY THE TRAVELLER.

HAVING been pressed by my friendly host to prolong my visit at the convent, it was only two days after I had finished reading the manuscript, and whilst I was still musing on its melancholy contents, that the prior entered my apartment.

"I have come," said he, "to make known to you one of those remarkable coincidences which the inexperienced are apt to imagine confined to romances, but which I have lived long enough to know are more common to real life. You have just read the imperfect story of my poor friend in time to be a witness to its closing scene. He is now dying."

"Dying!"

"So it is supposed; for his senses are returned; and I have just been sent for to administer the last rites of the church."

"After what you have said," I replied, "I suppose I may be allowed to attend you."

"Not as a stranger," returned the good priest; "but you have shown that you have a better title. A tear shed in sympathy makes men brethren who have never before met; 'tis a touching evidence of our common descent."

My heart was too full from what I had been reading to continue the discourse, and I followed the prior in silence.

As we entered the cottage, we were met by the old woman, who desired us to wait a moment till she had acquainted the *lady* with our arrival.

It seemed strange that a mere narrative should attach us so deeply to one we never saw; but so it was; the thought of meeting Rosalia made my heart beat as if I had known her for years, and I felt I know not what; perhaps it was most like the feeling we have for a beloved sister—the purest, and most delicate sentiment of which our nature is capable.

After a few minutes Rosalia came out, and, taking the good priest by the hand, led him to the sick man's chamber. On their way he inquired the state of her husband. She did not speak, but,

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have had my portion—perhaps, as much as mortal could bear—but my strength fails." Here he stopped.

I now looked at Rosalia; but no description can give a picture of her face at that moment.

After a few moments, the husband proceeded; "Rosalia,"—she pressed his hand in token of her attention. "Have we not known such happiness? —'Tis nothing to that we shall know when we meet again. You will not grieve then for the little space that parts us—even *now*," he added, in a fainter voice; "for I feel that my hour is come. Yet grieve not that it is so—'tis but the beginning of peace, which passeth all understanding. And —blessed be thy name, Parent of good! for now know I that thou lovest whom thou chastenest."

He then crossed his hands upon his breast, and raising his eyes, fixed them upward, with such an expression as I could hardly believe belonged to the human countenance.

"This is not the mere crumbling of a mortal body," thought I—"its passage to dust—but a revelation—touching our highest instinct, and giving it evidence of the invisible world;" for it seemed as if I could see his soul raying through

his eyes, and already pass into it; holding communion, even by those bodily organs, with the just made perfect. I was so overpowered by this holy vision (for so I might almost call it) that my eyes involuntarily fell—when I raised them again he was gone.

THE END.

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